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俺が**理由**？
だから



Yuusha no Furi mo Raku Janai— Riyuu? Ore ga Kami dakara—

— Even Posing as a Hero is Easy--Why? Cause I'm a God —

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[Lyzo-Translations]

CHAPTER 47

RETURN TO THE CAPITAL

Since I became a hero, I created the Hero Keika Beach at the port town Doruas, I saved the sinner and spread the name of Hero Keika by defeating Evil Squid of the Four Heavenly Kings. Thanks to that, my believers exceeded one hundred.

It's early in the morning.

I awoke in the bed.

Next to me, I can hear Celica's gentle sleeping breath. Her smooth cheeks are covered by her blond hair. She has long eyelashes that are engulfing her closed eyes.

While I enjoyed her sight, something was tickling my body.

I can feel something on my belly.

When I changed my line of sight into that direction, I saw, that the catfolk Minya had opened up my clothes and was licking my chest and shoulders with the tip of her tongue. Her charming black hair was sliding over my skin and tickling me.

Minya's Miko clothes are also greatly disheveled and her bulging breasts and black underwear are visible.

"...Minya? What are you doing?"

"Keika-oniichan... good morning"

When she looked at me with her large, black eyes, she embraced me tightly.

She glues her thin limbs to me while she licks my neck and cheeks. Just like a cat.

But I noticed something when we were in close contact.

-- Are you trembling? Are you scared?

I suddenly remembered the talk we had yesterday. Minya might have heard, that the capital was attacked by demons.

Minya's family is in the capital.

She's worried, no wonder that she behaves strangely.

I pat Minya's head. Her sharp, triangular ears were moving while her tail had drooped.

"Don't worry, your dad is definitely alright"

".....n"

It seems to feel good, so she closes her eyes and lets her body sink onto me. I am in direct contact with her skin. I can feel her young, flexible muscles and her body temperature.

-- Or rather, should I check?

While using "Clairvoyance", I turned my face towards the north, towards the capital.

The capital was in the middle of the country, along a big river in a wide plain.

It is surrounded by thick walls, and carriages and people go in and out of the city.

Hm? Isn't this strange?

There is no damage to the buildings in the city at all. The people also live normally.

It didn't look like it was attacked by demons.

I tilted my head.

"There's nothing wrong, given that it was attacked my demons --ah, your dad is fine as well."

"...Really? Keika-oniichan, I love you"

She squeezed me while she embraced me with her thin arms and legs.

I stroked her back to comfort her.

It seems to feel good and she purred like a cat.

Then, a voice came from next to me.

"Keika-sama, what are you doing so early in the morning...?"

The sleeping Celica woke up. Her blue eyes are wide open in surprise.

"Don't worry, you're next"

Because I wanted to stay like this, I embraced her in her disheveled gown.

"Hyaa?! You can't--au"

I stroke her head and I pat her back.

The strength left her body and a big roundness was pressed against me.

I comforted both of them like this for a while.



Brisk sunlight is falling in the early morning.

We stood on a pier at the mouth of the river.

A ship is prepared and the snake woman Dhalia was holding onto it with her sturdy body. She's the fastest to pull the ship.

"I'm counting on you today"

"Yes, Leave it to me, the fastest in our Naga tribe"

She hits her chest while saying this. She's wearing a bikini armor and her voluptuous breasts are shaking around.

Then the mayor Frank brought his son Lionel along with the sinner Fal.

"Good morning, Hero-sama. I'll leave my son to you"

"Don't worry. It may be a small inn, but you can place your trust in the owner."

"He captured the tower of trials with you after all. So even I am relieved"

--As expected of a large port town. Information travels fast.

I nodded.

"It will be a good experience for the child."

Lionel who was behind the mayor, lowers his head. His blond hair shines in the morning sun.

"I'll be in your care"

"Don't sweat it, Lionel. You were the one who decided on it"

"Yes"

Lionel smiled happily.

"Then, Hero-sama, here is what you asked for"

Frank took a small palm-sized package out of his pocket.

There were glass shards inside.

They are the pieces of the Demon Lord's monocle that Evil Squid had worn.

"That'll help. I can investigate some things with this."

"Is that so? It's good if it can become some strength-- then, we also found this"

"What's that?"

Frank lowered the bag that was hanging from his shoulder and showed me the inside. There was a deep black ball.

It was so round, that I thought that it might be a bowling ball for a moment.

"It was inside Evil Squid's body. Do you have any idea what this item might be? I thought it would be better to show it to you just in case"

"I see"

I looked at the ball with "Truth Sight".

[Evolution Egg] It's unknown what's born from it until it's born.

I look at its contents with "Clairvoyance". The data of hundreds of demons is swiftly changing.

It feels like the reels of a slot machine are rotating.

"What is this, it's like a slot machine.... It looks like the egg of a demon, but the contents are unknown."

"A, a demon's egg!? Isn't this dangerous? What shall we do?"

Then, Lapisia, who looks like a ten-year-old, approaches it briskly with small steps. She looks up at me with her golden eyes.

"Want!"

"Is that so.... Mayor, can we have it?"

"Yes, please. It's actually a great help to me"

After Lapisia received it, she held it in her arms.

"Did it! Thank you!"

While rejoicing, she was spinning around. Her blue twin tails are drawing an arc.

-- Since the next level up condition was "Raising", this egg might just be the right influence.

After that, princess Etoile came and boarded the ship.

We also board the ship.

"Well then, shall we go-- please hold on tight, everyone. It'll shake"

To my words, the ferryman raises his voice.

"Okay, release the ropes! We'll depart!"

The ship separated from the river bank and began to move northward.

Dhalia, who was pulling the ship, spoke with a dazzling smile.

"Keika-sama, I'll show you plenty of my power! --This"

Gunn!

The ship accelerates instantly. It shakes violently.

It cuts through the water surface and moves upstream.

We were already used to this, but Etoile riding for the first time screamed.

"HyaAA" What's this! I'll fall, fall! IyaAA!"

Etoile rolls over the floor and her red hair is swinging around. Her lace underwear was magnificently visible.

But the princess' attendants are desperately clinging to the ship and can't help.

"Well well"

While I was astonished I walked over the swaying ship and lifted Etoile.

She's desperately holding onto me.

-- It might hurt the business if she falls into the water.

I move to a place with a roof and sit down cross-legged.

I hold Etoile while I sit down.

"Are you okay?"

"Ye, yes. Keika-sama..."

Her violet eyes were moist when she looked up at me.

"Today we have to rush since we're in a hurry. Endure it."

"Understood"

She puts her thin arms around my neck and got a little more clingy. Her sweet smell tickles my nose.

I continue to hold her delicate limbs that are wrapped in a dress while the ship shakes.

For some reason, Celica also clung to me with her breasts pressing against my back.



We reached the capital just past noon.

That was fast.

We say goodbye to Dhalia and are on our way to the castle.

We boarded the prepared carriage and head there.

The royal castle.

The audience hall is about the size of a gymnasium with pillars lining up.

King Daphnes the third, who was of advanced age, was sitting on the throne that stood on top of the stage in the front.

I and Etoile were standing before it. I'm not kneeling. The hero's status is equal pro forma.

Only Etoile kneels while she greets him.

"Father, I brought Hero Keika-sama"

"I've put you through trouble... Sorry for the sudden call, Keika"

"That's what a king does. I've heard that the capital was attacked by demons"

"Yes. We somehow managed to repulse them. However, I called you for a different purpose."

"What would that be?"

The king looked sorrowful but he spoke clearly.

"I want you to subjugate one of the Demon Lord's underlings, Leo"

"Eh!? Leo?"

"Leo escaped during the demon's attack. No, the demons attacked to help him escape. Leo is without a doubt a subordinate of the Demon Lord, that's the conclusion we came to."

Leo is an underling of the Demon Lord?

I could hardly believe it.

"It seems unbelievable, I'm thinking the same. But the knights, soldiers and even the people have seen Leo escaping with the demons. You could say that this is irrefutable evidence."

"To subjugate Leo... shall I bring him back alive?"

"We don't care anymore if he's dead but be sure to defeat him."

A decision of the country.

I don't think I can retract it.

That youth with the blond hair and overflowing gentleness has a connection to the Demon Lord...

I can't believe it, but I have no choice but to assent.

"Understood, your majesty. I, Hero Keika, will definitely punish the Demon Lord's underling."

"Good, I entrust it to you"

I lowered my head and left the throne room.

CHAPTER 48

REUNION OF PARENT AND CHILD

I finished the audience with the king and was walking through a hallway in the castle. I headed to Celica who was waiting in a separate room.

Then, Etoile, who was walking next to me spoke.

"Keika-sama, tonight, I'm thinking about going to see my nanny"

"Is she nearby?"

"She works and lives at the castle, so... ehm..."

"What is it?"

"-- Won't... you come with me?"

I squinted and glared at her.

She shrunk under my stare. Her showy dress wrinkled when she grabbed it.

"You have to do it yourself. Alone."

"O, Of course. I mustn't rely on others. Excuse me."

She bowed and her red hair swings, then she walks towards the back of the castle.

I enter another room. It's about the size of a conference room.

It's plain unlike a reception room and Lionel and Fal are sitting at a four-seat table in the corner of the room while drinking tea.

Lapisia is sitting on the floor and holds the black egg. She rubs it at her cheeks and talks to it, but I can't understand it.

I approached the table.

Celica smiles over her whole face.

"Welcome back, Keika-sama. What did you talk about?"

"I've got a direct request from the king. To defeat an underling of the Demon Lord"

"If it's you, you can defeat any opponent, Keika-sama"

"If it would be like that, but..."

I looked at Fal in her habit. She holds a tea cup in her hands.

"Fal, listen to me"

"Yes? What is it?"

"The target of subjugation is Leo. Your brother."

"Eh!?"

Fal's brown and bright eyes are so wide open that they make perfect circles and her movements petrified.

I speak like I'm remonstrating.

"The demons that attacked the capital escaped with him. Because it was concluded that the demons moved with the purpose to save Leo, he seems to be without a doubt an underling of the Demon Lord."

"Su, Such a... brother is"

She looks like she is about to drop the cup, but Lionel, who sits beside her, quickly takes it and puts it on the table.

-- He's an attentive child.

"This is a decision of the country. It can't be changed anymore."

"Leo-niisan..."

Just when I thought that tears were floating in her brown eyes, she sniffed and began to cry.

The room was filled with a heavy atmosphere.

Celica quietly asked.

"So, what do you plan to do?"

"First we'll gather some intelligence to find out where he escaped to. Also we'll bring Lionel to Kynmerick's inn. And Fal... shall I send you to the village?"

Fal nods while crying.

"Yes... I'll do what you think is best, Keika-sama"

To change the pace, I clap with my hands.

"Okay. Well then, we'll head to the shop. We'll talk to the soldiers along the way. Please lend me a hand"

""Understood"" ""Alright""

We leave the room and walk in the hallway.

We listen to the knights and soldiers.

However, we didn't hear anything of importance so far.

We discuss the scale of the demon's attack and the direction they escaped to.

Luckily, we were able to meet the prison guard next and heard him out.

After we left the castle, we spoke to the people in the city.

We combine the information we have gathered so far.

The demons attacked from the north and the south.

Then Leo was taken out of the prison by a shadow in the shape of a person.

The guard said that he must have been a demon, because he was knocked down with a magic that he has never seen before.

When Leo escaped from the capital, the group of demons fled in all directions.

Therefore, it seems that it's unknown where he headed.

There seemed to be a smart commander who could hide his traces.

-- This is troubling.

I can't look for him if I don't know the direction he escaped into.

By the way, my popularity went down a bit because I was not at the capital at the time of the attack.

Damn--, Leo..... What if my believers decrease.

He'll have to take responsibility.



We arrived at Kynmerick's inn.

Because it was late in the afternoon, Kynmerick was very busy in the kitchen behind the counter.

As we entered the tavern, Minya absent-mindedly whispered.

"can't he at least sweep a little..."

"Well, it can't be helped-- Kynmerick, it's been a while"

Kynmerick comes rushing out after hearing my voice.

"Oh! Keika-sama----! Minya!"

Kynmerick practically jumped Minya hugging her.

Minya unexpectedly frowns.

"I'll get dirty. The oil stains will dirty my clothes"

"That's life! You left without telling me! You can't even think how worried I was!"

""

Minya wordlessly casts her eyes downward.

I was astounded and spoke.

"Minya, have you forgotten your promise?"

"Uh... Dad"

"What is it!?"

"I left without your permission... I'm sorry."

-- If you apologize, it's fine. The most important thing is that you safely returned."

Kynmerick stroked Minya's head with his huge hand.

Minya frowns like it's unpleasant, but her black tail swings joyfully.

--Ah, this might be the rebellious phase.

I thought such a thing.

Kynmerick calmed down after a while and looked at Minya.

"But, you've really changed a lot. Your face is imposing, and the clothes... they resemble Keika's, don't they?"

"Yup. I became strong. And I became... Keika's important person"

"Wh, what!? Is this true!?"

"I was touched at various places... it's a really important relationship"

"Whaaat! You went this far before marriage!"

Kynmerick glares at me with a complicated face mixed with anger and surprise.

I hastily denied it.

"Wa, wait a moment. The insufficient explanations are starting again! This will be troublesome!... Sure, Minya is important. But..."

I choked on my words.

If I'd say "I only changed her job and made her into a Miko to worship me", am I not practically saying that I am a god?

Then, I breathe in.

-- Because Minya is aware that I am a god and that it can't be told to people, it's no wonder that it'll become an insufficient explanation.

This had become like a quarrel with Celica before, but she didn't say it in a strange way on purpose.

She can't hardly say "I offer dances of worship for Keika-sama, the god I believe in".

Minya thinks about me in her own way and tries to cherish me.

I felt a clumsy but deep affection. My chest got hot.

Despite she is thinking about me this far, it would be insincere to dodge it.

Minya peeks over at me with her black eyes.

I nodded once and face Kynmerick earnestly.

"Sorry, Kynmerick. Just like Minya says, we have an important relationship. I think I'd like to have her by my side from now on as well. She won't be inconvenienced."

"Can you make her happy?"

"We are currently traveling, but yes, definitely"

Kynmerick gazed at me. Then he breathed a sigh.

"...Is that so. In that case, I won't say anything anymore. It's something that my daughter decided by herself."

"I'm indebted to you, Kynmerick"

"Thank you, Dad"

Minya hugged him tightly. She seems to put in quite a lot of strength and I heard a crunchy sound of bones.

"Ugh... di, didn't you really get strong... I'm glad to leave you to Keika... but?"

"What is it?"

Kynmerick looks sideways. Celica who was next to me was about to cry.

"Uuu... Keika-sama... what about me...?"

"You are obviously also important. Just like Minya"

"*sniff*, I'll believe you. Keika-sama... au"

I stroked her head and pulled her body close. Her delicate softness transmitted through the clothes.

Lapisia, who was hugging the egg, came to my side.

"I?"

"Ah, you are of course important as well, Lapisia"

"Hooraaaaay"

She spins around while holding the egg. Luckily, children are simple.

Kynmerick looked sullen but he shook his head.

"Well, great men have great fondness for the sensual pleasures. It can't be helped"

"Sorry, Kynmerick, I have a favor to ask."

"Sure, I'll listen to any wish you have, Keika."

"Do you have enough hands? I want Lionel to work here"

When he introduced himself, Lionel took a step forward and lowered his head. His blonde hair is gently swaying.

"I am Lionel and I come from the port town Doruas. Please take care of me."

"The work here is tough. Can you do it?"

Minya glares up at her father when he says this.

"...When even you can do, there's no problem, right, father?"

"Ugu...! N, Now you're saying this to me... Understood, let's try it."

"You're helping me there. As expected of you, Kynmerick"

"Thank you very much, Kynmerick-san"

"Alright. So first you should memorize how we record our hotel register. Come this way."

"Yes"

Lionel followed after Kynmerick. When he entered the counter, Lionel bowed to me and smiled.

Yup, give it your best.

Minya comes with the keys from the counter.

"I'll guide you to the room"

"Fal is in another room"

"Understood"

Minya takes the lead and starts walking.

Then Fal speaks to me with a thoughtful expression.

"Ehm... I'd like to talk to you later, Hero-sama"

It's probably about Leo.

I nod in response.

"Yes... You're probably tired from the trip. We'll talk after we had dinner and took some rest."

"Understood"

Fal lowered her head. The veil of her habit swayed.

Then we headed to the rooms.

We were guided to a room on the second floor facing south with a large bed.

Fal went to the room next to it.

I put down the luggage and sit on the bed.

Celica sat next to me.

Lapisia sits on a chair and permanently watches the egg.

Celica speaks.

"We still don't know where Leo headed. I thought we simply had to follow the route of the demons."

"After they separated, they most likely either met up somewhere and then escaped or went individually to the gathering point."

I used "Clairvoyance" to look around the capital.

I didn't see any suspicious demons.

At that time, the royal castle caught my eyes.

-- What happened to Etoile, who said that she would see her nanny?

I was a little worried, so I looked for her. I also invoked "Attentive Ears".

Because of her characteristic presence and the sound of her footsteps, I could find her immediately.

Her dress was waving while she was aimlessly walking in front of the door to the kitchen on the ground floor.

CHAPTER 49

THE PRINCESS AND FAL

I was watching Etoile with "Clairvoyance" and "Attentive Ears" from the inn's room.

She was going back and forth on the ground floor of the castle in front of the door to the kitchen.

I wonder why she is at the kitchen when she's supposed to meet her nanny.

Generally speaking, princess's nannies are women of high social status. They teach academics and etiquette.

And even if there would be nannies of lower status, they'd just be responsible for feeding, and their role would be quickly over.

Is it different in this world?

I ask Celica who is sitting next to the bed.

"Say, Celica, are the nannies in this country common citizens? Aren't they nobles?"

"Hmm, they are aristocrats or people who are in line with that and who are good at education and etiquette."

"Well, that's normal I guess"

I kept observing while wondering.

Etoile resolved herself and opened the door to the kitchen.

It's very spacious inside. The kitchen is as big as two tennis courts.

Steam rises from pots with soup for hundreds of people. Bread dough is being kneaded in front of the stoves and vegetables are chopped on chopping boards.

The heat was standing.

There were dozens of cooks working, but they stopped moving, startled by the appearance of the out-of-place Etoile.

A man with a good physique and a white cap came over.

"Princess Etoile-sama, what business might you have today."

"Head chef, i, is Isabelle here?"

"Isabelle-sama-- no, Isabelle is in charge of the soup pots"

"Is that so. Thank you."

"Yes, you're welc--eh?"

The chef stared in wonder when she thanked him. His mouth was gaping open.

That the head chef addresses Isabelle without any honorifics was probably Etoile's order.

Isabelle is probably of a high social status. Was she made to do some manual labor by a certain someone?

Etoile's red hair swung when she walked toward the pots.

She slows gradually down. She grasped her skirt so tight that it is flattening.

There were several huge soup pots, but in front of one of them was an elegant lady wearing round glasses.

She stirs the big pot and checks the taste.

But when she noticed Etoile, her hand stopped. She gracefully cleans her hands at her apron and smiles.

"Etoile-sama, you look well. It's been a while."

"I, Isabelle... aren't you mad that I made you cook?"

"I liked to cook my whole life. Also, a lady mustn't get angry in front of people."

"You're right. You often scolded me for that."

"Such things did happen."

Isabelle giggles. Her smile doesn't cease.

Etoile bit her lips and lowered her head.

"I'm sorry. Isabelle, I was mistaken"

"Ah, what's wrong, Etoile-sama"

Isabelle approached her and put her hand on her thin shoulder.

Etoile lifted her head and looked like she was about to cry.

"But, but! Because I lost my temper, such a work..."

"You mustn't, Etoile-sama. Whatever work it is, it is important. I should have taught you this."

"Ah..... That's not what I mean..... I'm sorry."

Etoile lowered her head to the surrounding chefs.

The chefs are looking confused and answer with "No" or "Don't bother".

Just by looking at only that reaction, I could see in their eyes just how domineering she acted until now.

Etoile speaks.

"Isabelle, there's something I want to tell you by all means."

"What might that be?"

"Ehm... This is..."

Etoile's mouth is flapping like a goldfish with an oxygen deficiency.

Isabelle didn't say anything, she only smiled and watched attentively.

Then, Etoile speaks with moist eyes.

"Isabelle. --For raising me... Thank you."

Isabelle smiled like a bud that opens.

"No no, likewise. Being able to watch over you was really enjoyable, Etoile-sama"

"But I, only did awful..."

"It seems like you became a fine lady already. There's nothing more gratifying for a nanny."

Etoile makes a wry face while asking a favor.

"*sniff*, Isabelle... again, won't you teach me lots of things?"

"Yes, of course. If you are fine with that, Etoile-sama"

"Uuuh... Isabellllle!"

Etoile dived into Isabelle's chest. She apologized over and over as she wept.

Isabelle kept smiling and gently stroked her back.

-- Well. This seems to be the best end possible.

I stopped watching and turned my face to my side.

Celica was tilting her head beside me.

"What did you do, glaring at the wall?"

"Ah, nothing. I only thought that Etoile might have become a good child."

"...is that so. I'm glad"

"Well then, shall we have dinner soon?"

"Yes, Keika-sama"

I took Celica and Lapisia and headed for the tavern on the ground floor.



Night.

After dinner, I came to Fal's room.

Fal, who wears her habit, sits on the edge of the bed and sews a small bag.

The sewing in itself probably is a way to relieve her stress.

I stand in front of Fal who's concentrated when I speak to her.

"Well, you should have something you want to talk about."

"A, yes, that's right!... It's about brother. Why should brother become an underling of the Demon Lord?"

"We won't know until we ask him in person... but, as it is, he'd just be killed as a sinner. To be alive in exchange for being a subordinate of the Demon Lord might be a reasonable choice."

"Fal is deep in thought."

"Are you... going to kill him, Hero-sama?"

"Not unless I confirm that he's the Demon Lord's subordinate.

Fal sighs.

"Why isn't god helping my brother. Brother did nothing but good deeds."

"For example?"

"When there was a large epidemic in the village, he forced his way though Dragon Mountain to fetch medicinal plants. Even though the clerics at our home were poor he took the sword and got rid of the demons. You'll hear that he is loved by everyone in the village."

"He's that kind of guy... that's precisely why I can't forgive the Demon Lord."

-- It's strange. If I'd be the Demon Lord, I'd quickly kill Leo because he is such an adequate fit for a hero.

Why should he use demons to save him?

Fal feebly shook her head. The veil of her habit sways.

"Brother should have been saved instead of me"

"Do you really think that?"

Fal suddenly gasps. She shook her head in a hurry.

"Yo, you're wrong. I'm really grateful that you saved me, Hero-sama. But..."

Fal hangs her head, but I put my hand at her thin chin and make her look upward. She looks at me bewildered.

"If you wish for salvation that much, I will become your god"

"H, Hero-sama!?"

"Call me Keika. Dedicate yourself to me and remain pure your whole life. Then I'll save Leo."

"R, Really? Her-- Keika-sama?"

"I won't promise things I can't do. But the only one who can save Leo is me."

Fal closed her eyes like she prepared herself before she spoke.

"...Please, Keika-sama. I don't care what happens to be, but somehow save my brother."

"This wish, I swear upon my name, I will grant it. Should you break your words, you'll receive divine punishment, so be careful... Still, I don't mind if you continue to believe in Lilille while paying your respects to me."

"Ah, yes, I understand."

I didn't mind if she believes in more gods than one. We have polytheism after all.

Because Fal also understood that, she nodded obediently.

"Well then. What's left is to find Leo. Do you have any idea where he might be?"

"My brother's whereabouts... He should be in the west after all. At the foot of Green Mountain, where the village is."

"The mountain where the dragon lives, huh. I see."

I expect Leo to know, that pursuers will come after him.

So it may be safe to think that it is better for people to escape to places that make pursuers refrain from intrusion.

In that respect, the dragon is neutral, and arbitrary invasion is not permitted.

If the village where you lived is nearby, you can also ask collaborators to get you food regularly.

"It seems likely. I will focus the the search on the west side"

"Yes... then, please take care of brother."

"Leave it to me"

I stroked Fal's head. Her face turned bright red and she looked down.

"Can I wait at this inn?"

"The house at the village isn't done yet, so I don't particularly mind.... But could you make me some smaller bags?"

"How should they be?"

"About this, and embroidered with this pattern..."

Because it was difficult to explain verbally, I wrote on a piece of paper while explaining it.

"Yes, this can be done easily"

"Then, please make a lot of them... well, I don't think I have to tell you."

"When I said this, Fal laughed for the first time."

"Ye~s. Making them calms me down."

After that, I put a sudden thought into words.

"Later, ehm, won't you teach Lapisia some healing magic?"

"I don't mind, but..."

"Lapisia should have a talent for healing magic, but she hasn't picked it up at all"

"Was that so. Then I'll try to teach her when I have some time to spare."

"This helps. Well then, I'm counting on you."

I left the room and headed for the ground floor.

When looked at my palm with "Truth Sight", the number of believers increased and decreased continuously.

-- They still can't believe in me completely, huh. It seems that at least Fal will become my believer once I have saved Leo.

However, even though I declared that so imposingly, I don't have any idea how to help him.

I still wished for some more information.



Late night.

I sit next to Kynmerick at the counter.

There are no other customers.

We drank some alcohol while eating snacks. It was some bitter liquor.

When I finished talking about the port town, Kynmerick tilted the glass and spoke.

"I see. She got some inspiration by Madam when she met her. That alone would have been impossible for me. I'm glad she went on the journey."

"To be honest, I also didn't think that Minya would become such a resolute child."

The corner of Kynmerick's mouth distorted slightly.

"I think that she got a good man, but as a parent I feel a little lonely."

"You don't have to worry because her partner is a good and sincere man."

"I wonder about that. There's a possibility that he's just a womanizer"

I laughed scornfully and drank my beverage without answering.

"So, how is Lionel's work? Does it look like he can make a living here?"

"I was worried because of his meager build, but he learns fast. He cleans fast and is polite. He can also talk to the customers without any flaw. I can probably leave the handling of the reception and requests to him in three more days. Cooking still seems to be hard for him though."

I guess that raising and lowering the big pots and wielding the frying pans might still be harsh with his thin arms.

Minya was probably fine because she is a catfolk child.

"I think he'll get used to it before long. I'm glad that he is useful."

"I wonder, who is Lionel exactly? From his attire and manners I thought he might be a noble. You don't have to tell me if its unpleasant to talk about."

"Ah, he's the son of the mayor of Doruas"

"Mayor, huh. I see. Lionel looks like he'll become a good mayor."

"...yes, I guess so"

I suddenly thought about Jean who developed an interest in the mayor's occupation.

For some reason I got a bad premonition but I stopped thinking about it.

I wonder if Lionel becomes an adult who can push through things by himself in such a future.

I picked up some vegetables that were marinated in fish sauce and eat. The saltiness goes well with the alcohol.

"By the way, it was terrible yesterday, huh. You were attacked by demons"

"Nah, there were only lots of curious onlookers who made a fuss. Not a single building was damaged."

"The demons seem to have escaped to the west, do you know anything?"

Kynmerick looks at me in astonishment.

"As expected of the hero. You're fast at gathering intelligence. The suppliers from the nearby villages and the paddlers who come from the west are saying that they saw a lot of demons moving west."

"So it was like that. The confirmation really helped."

"It's give and take. I'll be counting on you in the future."

"Likewise. I'll be in your care."

That said, I and Kynmerick clinked our glasses and drunk.

A brisk sound echoed through the dim tavern.

After that, we continued telling silly stories as the night grew late.

-- The next morning, Kynmerick was unable to get up, so Minya had to replenish the stocks instead. Later she angrily made him sit in seiza.

CHAPTER 50

TOWARDS THE WESTERN VILLAGE

The birds are singing in the morning.

After eating breakfast at the tavern on the ground floor, I came back to my room.

I actually should be chasing after Leo right away, but I still had something to do.

Celica seems to have left somewhere, only Lapisia is in the room.

She sits on the floor, holds the egg with her thin limbs and sings with a smile.

She seems to enjoy herself.

Then Fal in her habit came to the room.

"Good morning, Keika-sama. Is Lapisia-chan here?"

"Yes --heeeey, Lapisia"

Lapisia's hair swung when she looked into our direction.

"yeees?"

"Let's study magic together"

"n..."

She looks at me with her golden eyes while hugging the egg.

I strongly nodded.

"Go. It's fun if you can use magic"

"Understood!"

Accompanied by Fal, Lapisia went outside.

The room becomes quiet.

I sat down at the desk and took out the package I got from the mayor.

Shards of "Demon Lord's monocle (old type)".

I'll try to find out the composition and how it was made.

First I pulverize a shard. I pick it up with my fingertips and crush it.

Then I put magic into the pulverized glass to analyze it.

As a result, I learned how it was made.

First, glass is mixed with powdered gems and horns of demons, then baked until it is hard, next it is made into a lens and finally it is polished up by the Demon Lord's magic.

By doing so, it seems that it got the abilities of long distance view and to see through the "Light" attribute.

This means...

This huge monocle with a diameter of two or three meters was diligently polished by the Demon Lord.

That was a lot of work.

So even though they now have a new type around, Evil Squid's monocle was most likely postponed because it is a lot of work to make.

The old type was unable to see through the "Light" attribute when it was only secondary like with Fal and Leo.

Celica was not judged in the same way, so it's only a rough estimation.

Then, there was a long distance view built in, so it can be concluded that the Demon Lord does not have clairvoyant abilities.

In other words, even if an unexpected incident occurs, he can't immediately confirm it, but has to send out his subordinates.

"I see"

So my existence also shouldn't have been known until recently.

There was also a magic to track its location put into it.

I can't carelessly throw this into the garbage bin.

That's about what I found out about it.

It may be a small discovery but in its entirety it's important.

"Well then, shall I go?"

I re-wrapped the shards of the monocle and put them in my pocket, then I grabbed my backpack.

I left the room.

I heard disputing voices when I went down to the tavern on the ground floor.

Rather than a dispute, isn't it actually a one-sided voice?

When I peeked into the kitchen, Minya stood there with crossed arms and an imposing stance.

Kynmerick sits in front of her in seiza. He shrugged his shoulders and curled himself up.

Minya speaks with a monotonous voice while her face is expressionless.

"You can't make food if you don't buy ingredients. You understand that?"

"Yes, that's right."

Kynmerick nods with a victorious attitude.

"This place is located in a side street and small. We'll go out of business if we don't have food. You understand that?"

"Yes, you are right."

"The goods that are lined up at the morning market are cheap and good, so you have to buy them. Which means you have to go early. You understand that?"

"Exactly."

Due to his always similar reply, her pointy ears are trembling with anger.

"When did you get up today?"

"Ugh... this is, yesterday, I drank with Keika..."

"Keika-oniichan got up early today even though he drank with you. Father, when did you get up?"

"Ugugu..."

"You're prohibited from drinking alcohol for the time being as punishment"

Kynmerick reflexively rises to his knees.

"Th, that is...!"

"Who went to pile up the stocks today?"

"*Gugugu...!*"

Kynmerick grits his teeth and goes back into seiza.

Minya nimbly unsheathed her kitchen knives.

"Who went to pile up the stocks?"

"Ah, yes. I got it, I will abstain from drinking"

"Very well"

Minya sheathed the kitchen knives. With her usual expressionless expression, she's still clad in an aura of anger.

"Damn, you're just as scary as your mother..."

Kynmerick wiped the cold sweat from his forehead.

I scratched my head and said.

"Are you ready? I wanted to depart soon."

Minya's triangular ears are standing up with a *ping*.

"Understood. I'll prepare immediately"

Minya went to put her luggage together.

I speak to Kynmerick who is still sitting.

"You have it hard, huh?"

"Well, I know that it's my mistake that I overslept and couldn't buy up.... I was saved because Minya was here."

"Although alcohol is important for relaxation as well. As long as you're not 100% drunk, you can just tell Lionel to take over I guess."

"That'll help"

Kynmerick broadly laughed.

Then we started to prepare for our departure.

I tell Lionel thoroughly about the alcohol.

Kynmerick sees us off from the inn's entrance.

"Stay healthy! And don't push yourself"

"I know... ah, that's right."

"Hm? What is it?"

I took the package with the monocle shards out of my pocket.

Can I ask you to bring this to the Naga of Driad Firm to dump this into the ocean? They should listen to you if you mention me."

"Understood. I'll do it later."

"Please do it. Well then, we're off"

"See you again!"

I slightly raised my right hand to Kynmerick's cheerful voice and we departed.

We are heading west.

I have two objectives.

To help Leo and to help the people who are troubled by the dragon.

-- By doing so, I will also spread the name of Hero Keika!



Three days have passed since we left the capital.

Fields and meadows spread as we walk along a gentle sloping path.

We passed several villages but didn't hear anything of importance.

Only, that a group of demons headed west.

In the mornings, I am now waking up under the sound of attacking swords.

In the refreshing wind in the morning, the sound of metal clanks reverberates with
cling clang.

I am under the tree, where we are camping and watch Celica and Minya, who are fighting at a vacant spot.

Celica's way of fighting is sincere and based on taking over the basis.

Minya on the other hand leverages suicide attacks with consecutive strikes like a dance.

Just watching the competing beautiful girls brightens up my heart in the bright falling sunlight.

Celica's blond hair is leaping and her big breasts are shaking.

Minya's slender limbs are dancing.

Her red skirt is spreading while her black Hakama is moving like it lifts up.

Both of them had sweat running over their white skin.

It is a suiting beauty precisely because of their high class jobs.

I was watching them for a while.

At the end, Minya's kitchen knives are at Celica's thin throat.

"It's my defeat... --I couldn't win even once. I still have a long way to go."

"That's not true.--You're strong, Onee-chan"

"Thank you"

Celica smiled while her blue eyes were half closed.

Minya returns the kitchen knives into the sheathes at her waist.

I got up and applauded.

"It's wonderful every day"

"Good morning, Keika-sama"

"Keika-oniichan, good morning"

They lightly panted while saying this.

It's amazing that they are only lightly breathing after moving that much.

After that we had breakfast and continued our travel.



Twilight.

We reached a small village.

We were supposed to stay at the house of the mayor, but there was something to worry about.

There were huts lined up at the border of the village like a slum.

While we had dinner in the dining hall, the village head sitting next to me looked troubled as he spoke.

"Hero-sama, if you are heading west, might you not be able to do something about the dragon?"

"So it's like that. What will you give me if I get rid of it?"

"Ugh... I'm sorry. This village is poor... or rather, even if you won't defeat the dragon, maybe you can resolve it in a discussion."

"I don't have to beat him? But aren't the villages near the western mountains attacked?"

"Yes, that's right. We also have evacuees at this village..."

"Those huts, huh."

"But, the dragon possesses a god-like strength, she even attacks ferocious beasts. I'm sure, if it's you, you can have a discussion with her and quench her wrath, Hero-sama"

"I see"

I was thinking while I put my hands on my chin.

He seems to be strong, but he shouldn't be an opponent to me.

Instead of thinking how to help, I thought about how to sell my name.

The village head lowered his head in earnest.

"I beg of you. At this rate we won't be able to continue to live here."

"Understood. If I get rid of the dragon, please erect statues of me in the surrounding villages."

"Eh!? In all the villages!?"

"I won't ask to do it immediately. You can discuss it with neighboring villages and then

decide it."

"I, I understand. In that case, I'll accept the condition and try to persuade the other villages. It might take some time though... I'll give my best."

The village head bowed his head.

I nodded and continued my meal.

-- Then, I noticed something interesting.

"...Are these terms okay? Isn't there already someone else tasked with the dragon extermination?"

"Ye, yes. A hero from a neighboring country was invited to resolve the situation, but I hear that instead of doing something about the dragon, he just demands money and goods... and also women"

"Heh. Is there such a hero?"

"Yes. He's staying at the town called Kerkia that lies straight to the west following this highway."

"...Interesting. I'd like to meet him"

Because I had such a wicked smile, Celica spoke to me with a worried voice.

"Keika, are you OK?"

"Don't worry. I'm just looking forward to find out what kind of hero that might be"

"Celica was wryly frowning when she looked at me while I was laughing with a *kuku!*"

CHAPTER 51

THE HERO AND THE HERO

We arrived at the town of Kerkia around noon the next day.

As a town in the agricultural zone, it was a bigger one, had an outer wall and was collecting taxes from villages in various places.

Besides agricultural crops, items made in town are brought in and traded. Also materials from gutted demons.

For that purpose, a flourishing point of contact for trading companies was established.

For the time being we headed for an inn.

We chose the more expensive one between the two in this town.

When we entered, it looked like a common inn.

The ground floor is a tavern while the upper floor acts as an accommodation facility.

I accompanied Celica, Minya and Lapisia and headed for the counter.

Then, the gazes of the customers gathered. Especially around Celica's chest and around Minya's thighs.

-- They became stronger and more beautiful when I upgraded their classes. It should be obvious that they'll draw attention.

Well, we ignore the harmless gazes and I ask for a room at the counter while showing the "Proof of Hero".

"Four people, do you have a vacant room?"

"Ah! Hero-sama! Yes, our best room is vacant. Please take it!"

The owner doesn't take any money in advance, picks up a key and tries to guide us to the room.

Just when I thought that he might want to speak to me, a voice rose from the corner of the room.

"Hey! What's this supposed to mean? Didn't you give the best room to me?"

There was a middle-aged man with sharp eyes standing there.

His comrades who are sitting with him also have bad expressions in their eyes. There is a muscular giant and a shady looking man with long hair.

I knew it without being told.

This seems to be the hero of the neighboring country.

I looked at the assumed hero with "Truth Sight".

[Status]

Name: Eddie (Eduardo)

Gender: Male

Age: 41

Race: Human

Job: Pleasure Cutthroat

Class: Warrior Lv 45

Attributes: "Wind"

Attack strength: 321

Defense strength: 283

Vitality: 752

Mental strength: 192

[Data]

Has a bounty on his head in the neighboring country. Value: 60 large gold coins

Weak.

Or rather, what's "Pleasure Cutthroat"?

Does such a job exist?

He's not even a person anymore.

But it's amazing. 60 large gold coins. That's about 6 million yen.

The others also didn't look like more than idiots though.

I approach Eddie.

Eddie is coming towards me as well.

"Yo. Are you this country's hero? With such a thin body-- *Gufu!*"

I straightforward bumped into Eddie.

Eddie is blown away and hits the wall.

Eddie shouts while holding his nose.

"Bastard! What are you doing!?"

"Ah, sorry. I thought you were garbage."

"Wh, what was that! Who do you think I am, I'm a hero!"

"Ooh. Do you have any evidence?"

"Taste this... Look at it in astonishment!"

Eddie rummaged through his pocket and took out a round medal.

The appearance certainly resembles the "Proof of Hero"-medal.

When I looked at it with "Truth Sight", it came out as "Proof of Hero (Fake)".

"How's this, are you giving up? I'll forgive you if you leave the women behind."

"I'm also a hero though."

That said, I took out the "Proof of Hero (Genuine)" from my chest hidden under my clothes.

But Eddie still threw curses at me.

"Whether you're a hero or not, it doesn't matter! Won't this become a problem between the countries?"

"I wonder about that. Only if you'd be a real hero"

"What!"

I spoke while meddling around with the "Proof of Hero".

"I only noticed recently, but when you touch the outer perimeter of the medal--"

Suddenly, the surroundings became bright.

"Uwa, what's that!?" "It's as bright as outside" "What's going on!?"

The other guests who were in the bar were making noises.

This was a power of the [Proof of Hero].

A mechanism like a flashlight that illuminates about 10 meters around yourself.

It seems to be useful during dungeon explorations and the like when you do not have a torch.

"If it's a real 'Proof of Hero', you can do it too of course, but can your 'Proof of Hero' really do that?"

"Ugh... m, mine is from a neighboring country, so..."

"Heh? Aren't all of them supposed to be the same, no matter the country? Isn't it strange that a 'Cutthroat' with a bounty on his head has one in the first place? Isn't that right, Eduardo?"

The color in Eddie's eyes changes.

"Wha, what was that! --Hey, you guys, do it!"

"Yeah!" "Leave it to me!"

The giant and the guy with the long hair are standing up.

I looked behind me and said.

"Right... Celica, you take the giant, and I leave the guy with the long hair to you, Minya. Beat them up but don't kill them."

"Yes!" "Understood"

Celica unsheathes her slender sword and Minya takes her kitchen knives into her hands.

They give off the atmosphere of beautiful war maidens.

The guy with the long hair holds a dagger and speaks.

"You're cute, how old are you? I'll be kind to you!"

"No need"

Minya moved. Fast like the wind. Her Miko clothes are fluttering.

kinn!

A sound is emitted when the dagger and kitchen knife collide.

"He, if it's just thi... what!"

While she locks the dagger with her right kitchen knife, her left kitchen knife aims for his side.

The guy seemed to panic and jumped backward while his hair was swinging.

However, Minya doesn't let him gain any distance.

She kicks the floor in pursuit.

She unleashes a series of dance-like attacks.

The dagger of the long hair guy is emitting sparks while he defends against the kitchen knives, but he was unable to evade the supple kicks.

Minya's thin foot hits his stomach.

"*Gufu!*"

He falls to his knees and vomits.

"Dirty"

goh

The handle of the kitchen knife struck against his head.

"*nga!*"

The guy with the long hair fell forward with his face ahead into his own vomit.

She sheathed her kitchen knives and turns away in disinterest. Her beautiful posture is like a painting.

Her cat ears still stayed attentive.

Celica was facing the huge man.

The man lets the muscles of his upper body swell and swings his thick club.

Celica doesn't receive it but skillfully misdirects it with her slanted sword.

She swings her blond hair and nimbly thrusts with half her strength.

She gives a shallow wound to the huge man's body.

The big man laughs while blood is running along his tanned skin.

"Weak weak! I'll look forward to how long you can evade!"

"You seem to be sturdy, I'm relieved-- *Ha!*"

Unlike before, she releases a stab with her whole body strength.

The man doesn't evade but uses the club as a shield.

goss!, with a dull sound, the sword penetrates the club.

However, the huge man laughs sneeringly while he lets go of the club and jumps forward.

"Naive, Ojou-chan! You'll pay with your huge breasts for pointing your sword against the hero party!"

He approaches like a two meter flesh wall as if he tries to crush into her.

The corners of Celica's mouth are tilting upwards, letting out a sudden smile.

"Keika-sama is the only one who may touch me"

Celica holds her slender sword that still pierces the club at her waist.

Then she quickly thrusts it outward.

--"Gale Sting"!

doonn!

Blown off by a mass of wind, the huge man is slapped into the wall.

At the same time, the club detaches from the sword and hits his head with a *goss*

"*gugaa*"

The huge man falls with his eyes ahead onto the floor.

Celica speaks as her breasts are warping when she waves her slender sword to clear it from the blood.

"You still have lots to learn"

While watching them fight, I was impressed how strong they have grown.

I approach the fake hero Eduardo in front of me.

Eddie was freaked out.

"I, if you do something to me, the neighboring country won't keep silen--*gua!*"

I hit the armor where it covers Eddie's stomach.

The armor dents in the shape of my fist.

Foam spouts out of his mouth while his limbs are stretching.

I clap my hands to remove the dust and speak to the surrounding group.

"Someone, call the knight order or the guards. This impostor lied about being a hero."

"I already called them! They'll come soon!"

The tavern is filled with noise of screams and cheers.

"Amazing!" "So they were impostors!" "Shit, they stole my money" "At home, my daughter, my daughter...!" "That's a real hero for you" "So cool..."

I can hear voices of heartfelt trust.

I might be able to find some believers if it's now, but before that, knights clad in armor entered under the sound of many footsteps.

The captain who was taking command saw me and saluted.

"Th, this is, Hero-sama! Thank you very much for defeating the villains!"

"That man over there called Eddie is a cutthroat with a bounty on his head in the neighboring country. Absolutely don't let him escape."

"Yes! I'll arrange for that immediately!"

The false hero party was tied up and taken away.

The captain came to my side and spoke.

"Hero-sama, may I consult with you about something?"

"What is it?"

"We prepared counter-measures against the dragon but they relied on the support of the fake hero."

"I see. That's why he behaved so self-importantly... You have to check properly"

I told him what the real thing can do while I showed the "Proof of Hero" to him.

The captain lowered his head apologetically.

"I don't know how to face you... but, it's impossible for us to meet the dragon alone and we needed the power of a hero to have a discussion"

"I see.... Then, I'll do something about it"

"Re, really, Hero-sama? Thank you very much! Please instruct us in any way you want!"

Hmm, I thought with my arms folded.

What should I do.

"Yeah. First, gather intelligence on the dragon. Then, since the damages seem quite severe, divide Eddie's bounty among the villages for reconstruction or at least for consolation."

"Oh...! How benevolent, to care about the citizens without any selfish desires! That's a real hero... --Understood. I'll instruct the knight order to complete the tasks even at the cost of their lives!"

The captain wiped the corners of his eyes with his fingertips. It seems he was moved to tears.

-- To be frank, giving out the money is also a means of making them erect the bronze statues and to let my name take root for many years to come...

My heart hurts a little, but I have to do this to gather believers and become a god.

"Well, give your best. Now, I got a personal request from the king to subjugate Leo. Please let me know if you come across any information."

"I understand. I'll also tell the others."

The captain immediately gave out the instructions to the members of the knight order.

"I thought about that before, but don't you have diplomatic relations with the country to the west? Why didn't you inquire them?"

"I'm sorry. The country in the west, the Fabrica Kingdom is extremely strong and defeated the Demon Lord's army many times over. So we believed the hero unconditionally if he comes from there."

"Strong?"

"Yes, industries are thriving and construction and blacksmithing technologies are very advanced."

"I see. I'd like to go there once.... But for now I have to settle the matters of the dragon and Leo first."

After that, I continued to talk with the captain and got some information.

About the villages' locations, the roads and the geography around here.

--When.

As we were talking, suddenly one of the knights came running.

After he bowed when he saw me, he reports to the captain.

"It is said that demons are fighting nearby the town. It might not be related to the dragon or the hero, but I report just in case"

The captain was pondering but I thought it might be worthwhile.

"Where is it? I'll go"

"Yes, Hero-sama! It's northwest of the town"

"Northwest... the foot of Green Mountain lies in that direction"

"Yes! Shall I guide you?"

"No, it's fine. Prepare hors--Boo Horses"

I called into the bar.

"Celica, Minya, Lapisia. We'll go"

""""Yes""""

We mounted the Boo Horses and headed northwest.

CHAPTER 52

PICKLE THE DWARF

It's been an hour since we left the town of Kerkia on our horses.

I mounted a Boo Horse together with Minya who sat in front of me.

Celica was riding with Lapisia.

Because only Celica and I are able to ride.

The Boo Horses have keen noses, so we went straight to the destination.

Then we could clearly see Green Mountain with its pointy peak looking like a blurry spear above the clouds.

Near the forest spreading at the foot, there were many wolf-like demons surrounding a few other demons.

There was a tall Wolf Beastfolk on the surrounding side leading the command.

"Absolutely don't let them escape! Kill the traitors!"

He shouts with his wolf face. It is completely covered in fur. He's different from the usual Beastfolk.

I looked at him with "Truth Sight".

[Status]

Name: Gowra

Race: Wolf Demon Race

Job: Commanding officer of the western Demon Lord's army

Attributes: "Darkness"

Attack strength: 1100

Defense strength: 300

Vitality: 600

Mental strength: 200

Heh. The Demon Lord's army?

What about the attacked side?

Apart from ordinary wolves, two small persons stood out.

[Status]

Name: Gow

Race: Demon Wolf Race (TN: different from Gowra's Wolf Demon Race)

Job: Fugitive Soldier of the Demon Lord's army

Attributes: "Dark Wind"

[Status]

Name: Pickle

Race: Dwarf

Job: Fugitive Soldier of the Demon Lord's army

Attributes: "Earth"

The surrounding wolves were of the same "Demon Wolf Race".

Gow is hurt and his life force is less than half.

Pickle is also hurt.

At any rate, they are fugitive soldiers.

--This is an opportunity to get some information.

I issue instructions while I gallop on the Boo Horse.

"Don't get caught in magic attacks! We'll help the surrounded and hurt demons!"

"Yes!" "Understood"

Minya who was still sitting in front of me jumped down in her Miko dress.

She unsheathed her kitchen knives and kept running beside me at the same speed as the horse.

I pulled out my sword and applied some water from my gourd.

"This should do the trick... Obey my name of Keika Hikonomikoto, winds that ferry across the ravines since ancient times, gather and form a gale--'Roaring Blade Storm'"

A countless number of water blades are appearing and attacking the group of demons.

"*Gyao!*" "*Gea!*"

The wolves are chopped up by the wind blades.

Blood rises like smoke and the violent wind is dyed in a dark red.

The screams of the wolves echoed in the high blue sky.

I skillfully adjust the power so the fugitive soldiers in the center aren't exposed to the wind.

Therefore, it did not result in complete annihilation.

There are still dozens remaining.

A wolf man platoon commander is shouting.

"What's this! Who, the hell are you?"

Minya rushes in like a gale. Her black hakama flutters as if it's lifted.

"This is... Keika-oniichan"

"--*ga!*"

The kitchen knives drew a gleaming arc, and the neck of the wolf man was cut off.

Celica dashes forward after she got down from her horse.

"*Ha!* *teea!*"

Her slender sword is gleaming and her blond hair is dancing. Her red skirt opens up like a flower.

Each time a wolf is killed.

I arrived in the center of the fight while cutting down some attacking demons.

The fugitive soldiers who were injured have gathered together. A seriously injured wolf is snarling at me with a *grrrrr*.

"Are you okay? -- 'Recovery'"

The wound of the fugitive soldier is quickly healed. He stared in astonishment and looked at me.

Then, Pickle the dwarf who is only about fifty centimeters tall stands up.

"Why did you help us? We are also demons."

"You're fleeing from the Demon Lord's army, right? Maybe the enemy's enemy might be your friend"

"Are you believing that?"

His round eyes are shaking uneasily.

I took out the "Proof of Hero" from my chest.

"I am a hero. I won't kill unnecessarily"

"He, Hero-sama!? --I'm not a bad demon, it's the truth!"

Pickle put his fist to his chest and appealed to me.

I nod.

"Understood, I'll believe you-- For now, I will end this fight. You only have to think about protecting yourself."

I cut down demons even while we were talking, they aren't really causing any trouble.

I truncated the rest of the wolves that didn't flee together with Minya and Celica.

The battle ended in less than ten minutes.

It took a little longer because I had to protect Pickle.

No one got into a life threatening condition.

Minya already started to collect materials. She nimbly pulls the tusks and flays the wolves.

The fugitive wolves looked at it with frightened eyes.

Then Celica approached. She is holding her left hand. She seems to have been injured.

"Are you okay, Celica?"

"I'm terribly sorry, Keika-sama. I suffered an embarrassing defeat."

"It can't be helped with this many opponents. They worked well together as expected of wolves.

"Yes, I will be careful next time"

"Let's see... show me your injury"

I take her supple hand. Her palm is smooth.

Celica's cheeks are blushing.

But just when I was about to treat her, Lapisia came.

"Lapisia cures!"

"Oh. Have you become able to use recovery magic?"

"I learned from Fal!"

"Very well. --Yup, then please try it"

"Yup Understood"

"Lapisia puts her hand on Celica's wound. A bright light starts leaking from her fingertips before she starts chanting.

"--'Cure'"

An intense radiance is born to an extent you wouldn't believe that it's just her first magic and Celica's wound is healed in an instant.

"This is, awesome"

"Healing this wound in an instant is... amazing"

I thought that it would be strange no matter how I looked at it, so I looked at her skills.

[Status]

Name: Lapisia

Gender: Female

Age: 257

Race: Half-God

Job: Earth Mother God Lv 3 (Raising)

Class: Healer, God Art User

Attributes: "Good Harvest" "Radiant Soil" "Sacred Ground"

[Healer Skills]

Cure: Restores an ally. (Experience: 35/100)

Blurred: It makes your body blurry and makes attack stronger. (Experience: 5/100)

Decline: Softens your opponent. (Experience: 1/100)

Sleep: Makes the opponent sleep. (Experience: 3/100)

She has skill levels!

It seems that the effect will become stronger as the skill level increases.

Isn't Lapisia somehow playing a different game? Just as expected of a god.

Although she has "Healer" skills, there aren't any for "God Art User". Hmm, I can't teach her because I'm a god from a different world and the magic system and techniques are different.

Well, I don't have any trouble with it.

For now I stroked her head.

"Well done, Lapisia"

"*Ehehe~*"

She was smiling with her whole face and made her blue twin tails sway in delight.

By the way, Lapisia didn't really aggressively fight but everyone who came at her had their tables turned on them.

The wolves she kicked or hit with her full power teared to pieces and the lumps of meat flew far into the distant.

It should be raining blood dozens of kilometers afar.

I just pray that there are no people at the falling points.

"Well then"

I turned to Pickle.

Pickle bowed deeply.

"Thank you for your help, Hero-sama."

"No, it's fine. Rather, tell me what happened. Why were you attacked?"

"The truth is, we selfishly acted against the orders..."

I nodded while I was already expecting this.

"Are you the ones who attacked the capital?"

"Eh, you know?"

"You wanted to help Leo. Am I wrong?"

"That's right... bu, but! Leo isn't bad! He really is a good person!"

Pickle frowns while he is appealing.

I smiled with a cheat smile.

He will probably guide me to Leo if I can relieve him.

"Ah, I also know that. I only came to meet and speak with Leo."

"Yup, leave it to me! He's in a cave at the foot of Green Mountain! I'll guide you!"

Pickle went like he was hopping in front of me.

--That was simple.

I broadly grinned in my heart.

However, the wolves are getting close to him. It seems they are saying something.

Then Pickle shook his head and got angry.

"Didn't he save us? He's a real hero! Why are you doubting him!"

The reprimanded wolves dangle their tails.

--The wolves are correct though. Because I have the mission to subjugate Leo.

But Pickle seemed to believe me completely and walked like he was jumping in front of me.

We got on the Boo Horses and followed.

Only Minya was on guard and walked next to us.

She was carrying about ten furs from the wolves that she procured while I chatted.

--She works fast.

By the way, Minya rose two levels in this battle and became a "Dance Warrior" Lv 17.

"Thief" rose by one to eight.

She got a new skill.

"Gale Thunder": Absolute preemptive strike. Chance that the opponent is perplexed by surprise.

It might be because of my protection and my own attributes, that she gets many skills related to wind.



We entered the forest at the foot of the mountain and dismounted from the horses.

The branches are likely to hit our heads otherwise.

I ask Pickle who is going ahead.

"So, is Leo fine?"

"Yup... but he's a little depressed."

"But why did you try to help him?"

"Because I'm a friend... A long time ago, he saved my life. We dwarfs are tasked to collect ores and gems, but when I was found by humans and they nearly killed me, I was saved by Leo. He also told me about a place where I can safely gather ores."

"Heh. So something like this happened?"

"That's how it is for everyone. They got saved by Leo... So now it's our turn to save Leo!"

--Just that it was a mistake.

But I couldn't say it.

Even though he was identified as a sinner, I could have done something one way or another.

I could have helped him by taking him into custody. Or buy him if he'd be sold as a slave.

Or just like I did at the time with Evil Squid, defeat the appearing Demon Lord's underling just when he appears and free him.

If only he wouldn't have been determined to be an underling of the Demon Lord and become a subjugation target.

I asked while sighing.

"If you were in the Demon Lord's army just until recently, do you know about the Demon Lord's movements? Is he aiming at me as expected?"

"I don't think that this is possible at the moment."

"What do you mean?"

"Demon Lord-sama is desperately trying to capture the saint. We got the order but don't know her whereabouts."

"The saint?"

"The person that troubles Demon Lord-sama the most. But we can't capture her. The search for the saint has the highest priority."

"I don't know the details, but she's more important than I, who has killed one of the Four Heavenly Kings?"

"Eh! The Four Heavenly Kings!?... I wonder, isn't the person who can 'Class Up' more dangerous?"

"'Class Up'... she can change Jobs, this saint?"

"Yes, that might be it. It looks like she makes people who she thinks might be able to defeat the Demon Lord into strong 'Holy Knights' or 'Grand Wizards'. She has already changed the Jobs for dozens of people."

"So it's a matter of which has priority, someone who can mass-produce high level Jobs or the uncertain information that a strong hero might have been born, huh?"

I guess he thinks that it's thanks to her that I became a hero and could defeat one of the Four Heavenly Kings.

I asked about another thing I was worried about.

"Do you know why the dragon is rampant?"

"I don't really know about Dragon-sama. But she seems to search for something."

"Is that so"

I guess I have to ask the dragon directly.

While talking about that, we headed deep into the forest.

Then it was about the time it became evening.

The entry to a cave opened up behind a slope.

CHAPTER 53

SUBJUGATE LEO'S PARTY!

At dusk.

Green Mountain towers like a spear piercing the clouds and is dyed red.

We arrived at the cave at the foot of the mountain where Leo, the suppression target is said to be.

Pickle, the dwarf who was guiding us, rushed into the cave with a smile on his face.

"Leo! I brought the Hero-sama! He'll help you!"

We enter next.

It seems to be a limestone cave and the entrance was so narrow that we had to crouch to get in.

The inside on the other hand was wide.

Water drips from the moist stalactites and the air feels cool to the skin.

There was a lot of pure water, so as a god related to water it felt very pleasant.

I touch the "Proof of Hero" to turn on the environment light.

The surroundings become bright with me in the center. It's magnificent that it doesn't cast any shadows.

Celica is next to me. Minya and Lapisia are walking behind me.

The voice of Pickle who ran into the cave's depths echoes many times over.

The cave became wider and higher as we walked further inside.

If speaking in roads, it would be about four to six lanes. Streams were flowing along the cave's walls. Even without further investigation, you can tell how clean they are.

After about ten minutes have passed, we encountered an underground lake.

It's filled with blue, clean water. The humid air is chilly.

Three persons are sitting around a bonfire on the shore.

A man wearing a coat, a boy with long ears, and with a gloomy face and blue hair, Leo.

The man who wears the black coat stands up. He is tall and slim. He wears thin glasses and holds a thick book in his hand.

He looks down as if he's displeased and pushes up the glasses with his finger.

"Well well, you did something troublesome again... The probability for trouble is at 55% I guess"

--'again', does this mean that it wasn't this guy who ordered the attack on the capital? Rather his demon friends acted on their own account?

Pickle is surprised.

"What do you mean!? This person is a hero! He saved us!"

"It's also possible that he only helped you to get information he needed to accomplish his goal. The probability is about 90%."

"Su, such a...!"

Pickle's look alternates between me and the man with tears floating in his eyes.

The man spoke while looking at the "Proof of Hero" that was shining at my chest.

"Especially because he is a hero, he follows the words of the king. The probability for subjugation is at 99%.... Am I wrong?"

I scornfully laugh as I speak.

"In that case, what would you do?"

"I won't let you do it!"

The man scooped up his black, long hair and stood to block the way to Leo.

--This is troublesome. Will he quiet down if I show off my strength?

I pulled my sword and said.

"Pickle, stand back. Thank you for guiding us."

"U... uwaaan!"

Pickle cried as he ran to the wall.

I looked at the man with "Truth Sight".

[Status]

Name: Dark Raven

Gender: Male

Age: 28

Race: High Human

Job: Sixth Realm Wizard (High Level)

Class: Mage Lv 40 Black Magician Lv 52

Ancient Magician Lv 38 Dimension Magician Lv 42

Magic Circle Master Lv 60 Grand Wizard Lv 88

Attributes: "Fire" "Water" "Wind" "Earth"

[Equipment]

Magic Circle Grimoire: Converts magic and spells into magic circles and lists them. Activates just by putting in magical power and saying the number.

Robe of Black Ravens: Robe made with raven feathers. Allows space-time manipulation. Magic attacks and Mental strength x2, Defense +77

Wow. He specializes in black magic.

Moreover, I don't know why, but he even seems to be familiar with magic and sorcery that doesn't originate from this world.

Well, since at least I came from a different world, there might be ways to do that.

"Do you know what it means to challenge the hero to a fight?"

"Unfortunately, I'm not a person caught up in common sense"

He puffs up with pride and pushes up his glasses with his finger.

His attitude is full of confidence.

"So generally speaking, just because he is a hero doesn't mean that he is a good guy."

The boy makes a fist under the sound of crackling fingers. His green hair spreads fluffy, making his long ears clearly visible.

"How do you want to check? With that fist of yours?"

"Isn't my fist now slightly different?"

I looked at the boy's fist that was wrapped in a red flame.

I looked at the boy with "Truth Sight".

[Status]

Name: Tilt

Gender: Male

Age: 142

Race: Elf

Job: Magic Fighter Master (High Level)

Class: Magic Fighter Master Lv 35

Attributes: "Raging Fire"

[Martial Artist Skills]

Punch

Kick

Second level punch

Roundhouse kick

Flying Swallow Leg

[Magic Fighter Master Skills]

Iron Fist: Punches the target with a fist harder than iron. Doubles damage.

Flame Fist: Attacks with a fist clad in a flame. Additional flame damage.

Burst Dance: A series of attacks with kicks clad a flames.

Fire Wave: Attack by hurling a flame.

[Passive Skills]

Protection of the spirits: Can talk with spirits. Increases ability score. Invalidates fascination.

Mental concentration: Invalidates stun and sleep when concentrating in battle.

Resistance against abnormal states.

Dragon Howling: Rise in muscle strength and speed. Intimidates the opponent.

So he has also a high class Job?

I guess it is the magic version of a martial artist.

It seems to be quite strong.

I was told before that ten elven years equate to one Human year, so he would be about 14 years old.

He certainly is cheeky.

Leo raised his head. He looks tired.

"Wait, Dark and Tilt. Keika isn't a bad person!"

"Lot's of things can happen even if he isn't a bad person. He might be a good hero for the king. --With a probability of 50%."

Dark glares at me with sharp eyes.

I also confront him holding my sword.

"Even if I said that I came to talk? I plan to help Leo."

"I don't think you can help him-- or do you have a good plan?"

I shook my head.

"At least not for now"

"Guess so. If there would be one, we would do it somehow!"

Tilt gets into a bad mood.

"In the first place, even if you call yourself a hero, can a guy who is only being served by women be any good? Do you even feel like beating the Demon Lord right now?"

--Yup, only women. That's right.

And right now I'm not interested in beating the Demon Lord until I've increased my believers.

He has too much of a sound argument, so I don't really have an excuse here.

Celica however wrinkles her brows while and speaks.

"There are things you can say and things you can't say! --eh?"

Blocking Celica's words, Minya readily comes in front.

"Badmouthing Keika-oniichan... I won't forgive you"

Her ears and tail are standing. She is clad in a tense aura.

I spoke.

"Leo. You got good comrades."

--Leo is enough of a hero to befriend demons.

So it's not surprising that he already gathered some excellent party members.

"You're all doing too much for me... so, can you please stop fighting each other?"

"I guess you're right. At least that's what I'd like to say, but it looks like our companions are already on fire"

Minya is still standing where Dark looked at previously.

Minya unsheathes her kitchen knives and points them at Tilt.

"Those words... Take them back"

"Not interested. My fist isn't for beating women and children."

"Then, just die"

Dark takes an exasperated looking breath.

"Tilt. You can fight for real. But your chance for winning is at 5%."

"Don't say stupid things! The companions of this hero who makes a harem for pleasure shall be stronger than me!?"

--It is a little offending, but I am actually quite pleased with only women, so it's a fair

argument I guess.

Besides, he certainly is stronger than Celica, that's a fact.

Just as I'd expect of Leo's companion, he seems to be a good guy as his frank opinion doesn't make me feel any bad.

But that's different for those who are devoted to me.

Minya's ears and tail stood upright from anger.

"That disrespect, definitely, I won't forgive"

"...Tilt. Your winning chance just dropped to 1%"

"What! That has to be a mistake--"

"I'm coming"

donn!, Minya kicked the ground and dashed forward.

The bare kitchen knives are twinkling. A cloud of sand is whirled up.

"Fa, fast!"

Minya already rushed in before he could take a fighting stance.

"*ya!*"

Carried by the yell, he lets out a punch at the slash coming from below.

"Damn!"

He hits the knife's side and deflects it.

However, the two sword style continues. Next is a slash from above diagonally from the shoulder.

He dodges it by a hair's breadth.

The kitchen knife in her left hand greatly cuts the air. She pitches forward before her posture collapses and turns her back at him.

"Got you!"

Tilt delivers a flaming fist towards Minya's back.

However, Minya kicked the ground before it connected without losing any of her forward pitching momentum.

--She kicks as her body is spinning.

Her flexible leg that is further sped up by a forward somersault hits Tilt's head like a whip.

"*uwa!*"

Tilt protected his head with his hands.

Her leg is repelled and drifts to the side.

But Minya quickly lands and waves her white robe as she targets his head with the kitchen knife in her right hand.

Tilt was unable to get away. --He steps forward to grab the hand holding the kitchen knife--.

goann!

Tilt was blown away.

While swinging her kitchen knife down, Minya stopped her movement and stretched her slender leg upward.

Her white thighs peek far out of her black Hakama. Her black hair fluffily returns into its original shape.

The kitchen knife is only a feint.

Tilt was distracted from the attack from above and was unable to respond to the kick coming from below aiming at his chin.

Tilt was kicked flying and fell into the underground lake with a big *splash*. A water column rises.

Before she started to pursue him, I spoke up.

"That's enough, Minya"

"...Understood"

She sheathed her kitchen knives and went back behind me.

Tilt returned to the shore under splashing sounds.

He spoke while water was dripping from his green hair.

"...My bad. I understand that you gathered good companions."

"As long as you get it it's fine.... Isn't it okay, Minya"

"Yes... I'll forgive him"

Her black hair swings while she slightly nods. Her ears moved.

I got my eyes off Tilt, who sits down at the bonfire and looked at Dark.

"What do you want to do? Want to test my strength? Whether I have the strength to help Leo"

"Sounds interesting... but, you would die"

"Don't worry- I have a general understanding of your magic."

To my words, Dark pushed up his glasses. They are sparkling.

"Heh? Even though I haven't done anything yet"

"I know. The book in your left hand, it's filled with magic circles that contain already prepared magic. They can be used immediately by saying the key word."

"...That's the right answer. It's regrettable, but it seems that the probability that the magic doesn't activate is very close to 0%"

"You're right. We'd better stop. Let's have a discussion."

However, Dark opened the book and set it up.

"Nevertheless, I want to help Leo with my own hands."

"Says the guy who permanently preaches about probabilities"

"Yeah, it's bad I guess.... But even I am fascinated by Leo's soul! --Aria magic circle activate! 3 6 15 26! --'Tyrant Nova'"

Four magic circles emerged and overlapped in front of Dark. They emit red light, black light, purple light and yellow light.

A flame of scorching heat is brought forth in front of the light.

I step straight into it while I quickly take my sword.

"--'Water Blade Grant'"

saa, saa!

A sound like cutting something hard echoed over the underground lake and the light composing the magic circles was scattering like fireflies before it disappeared.

The flame looks like it is twisting and then vanishes.

Dark's jaw dropped from shock. His glasses slide to the peak of his nose.

"I, impossible! Does this mean you cut through the magic circles drawn with light with a sword?!"

"Sorry for exceeding your expectations."

I swung the sword and sheathed it.

Dark looks heartbroken and falls to his knees.

"Such a... can't be... my magic formula is perfect... where... why..."

He starts to murmur with empty eyes.

It seems that I also cut through his pride.

"Well, don't mind it-- rather, can I talk to Leo now?"

Tilt and Dark are feebly nodding.

We surrounded the bonfire alongside Leo's party. Pickle is also there.

Celica prepared drinks from her water bottle.

Lapisia sat on the floor, hugging her knees while holding the egg between her thin legs...

Leo's smile looks still as tired as ever.

"I'm sorry, Keika-san. I got you into this mess."

"No, the feeling of wanting to desperately protect your comrades was thoroughly transmitted, so it's fine"

"Thank you very much. I am relieved."

"You're quite worn out, huh, Leo?"

"Yes... Although I tried to become a hero to protect everyone, I am called a sinner... I'm just causing trouble for the people I wanted to protect, it hurts my heart"

Leo slowly shook his head. His blue hair is smoothly flowing.

I spoke while I drunk some tea from the cup I received from Celica.

"Well then, let's come to the main subject. I was thinking, Leo, how about living while you're dead?"

"Eh?"

"It's difficult to revoke your status now that you've been recognized as an underling of the Demon Lord. So how about pretending to be dead to regain your freedom?"

To my words, everyone made a difficult face.

CHAPTER 54

DISCUSSION WITH LEO

We talked with Leo's party while we sat around a bonfire at the underground lake.

I speak.

"How about pretending to be dead while living in hiding?"

Dark raised his glasses a little while he speaks.

"That might be difficult. Even if we made a replacement body, the probability for exposure by the court magicians is at 99%."

"But, the subjugation request will continue until I either bring Leo or a dead body."

"If you bring Leo, he'll certainly be executed"

Tilt spoke in a bad mood.

By the way there is a technique for gods to make people by kneading earth.

You can do that as a chief god or production god class.

I had too few believers to do that yet.

Celica speaks.

"Then, how about resolving the misunderstanding of him being a subordinate of the Demon Lord?"

"There is no better evidence than him being rescued by demons"

Everyone breathes a sigh.

Pickle the dwarf looked like he was about to cry.

"Su, such a... I, I only, wanted to help Leo..."

Leo shows his white teeth and smiles.

"Just that feeling makes me happy. Thank you."

"I, I'm sorry...!"

Pickle raised his voice and began to cry.

Leo stroked his head to calm him down.

I looked at them as I spoke.

"Well, how about making it so, that the demons were actually capturing him instead of saving him."

"Eh? --Keika-san, what do you mean?"

"Leo possessed something important to the demons or stole it from them. That's why they captured him. Fittingly the dragon seems to be searching for something and attacks villages."

"There is no way they'd believe something like that. The probability is 0%."

"That's only if we'd be the ones who explained it. So we should let the concerned party let it explain herself-- the dragon"

"Eh?" "What was that!?" "Something like that... would that really work?"

Everyone looks troubled.

But Dark shook his head. His long, black hair swings.

"It's not easy to even talk to the dragon. The one here isn't a rural dragon but an ancient 'Fabula Dragon' living since times of myths. No way she agrees to such a silly story."

"If it's me I can do it. Well, it might be necessary to search for what she is looking for as a bargaining point."

Dark and Tilt turn their look at me with doubt when I say it so easily.

But Celica smiled and spoke.

"As expected of Keika-sama. He thinks of a way to resolve the problems regarding Leo and the dragon at the same time."

"As expected of Keika-oniichan"

They nod pleasantly as they completely trust in my strength.

"Well, in any case, I have to do something about the dragon. So it's just right."

Leo was staring dumbfounded, but then he burst into laughter.

"Just as expected, Keika-san. If it's you, you really can pull it off... understood, I'll leave my life in your hands."

"Le, Leo!" "Is that okay?"

Leo nodded deeply as he spoke to them.

"There is no one you can more depend on than him. Keika-san, please"

"Of course. Your sister Fal also made the request to help you after all."

"Fal is... is she safe?"

"Yeah, she became a sinner but I took her into custody. Don't worry."

Leo swung his blue hair and lowered his head.

"Thank you very much, Keika-san. Please keep my sister out of trouble"

"Not just your sister, you're also included"

When I was suggestively laughing, Leo got hooked up and also laughed.

Dark and Tilt bitterly smiled, Celica smiled.

The mood at this place was relaxing and the laughter quietly spread to the underground lake.

After that, the discussion continued as we sat around the bonfire.

"How can we meet the dragon?"

"She is in a cavern near the top of this mountain. But we have to go through the dungeon that is made here in the mountain."

"Is it problematic to fly there?"

Dark answers while he pushes up his glasses.

"It's impossible because there is a barrier set up. The space-time is distorted. The probability that the body is transferred in one piece is at about 17%."

"That's not particularly high, and the risk is too high for a wager"

Leo smiles.

"If it's Keika-san, he'll be fine. I also went to meet the dragon in the past and somehow managed to break through"

"Heh, is that so. Then it should be rather simple to go there by foot. Or would it be better to let you guide us?"

"Leave it to me. I'll guide you"

"Please do"

Celica speaks.

"Leo-san, if you've met the dragon, how is she?"

"Hmmm. She's temperate and fierce, but she's definitely not bad."

"I understand that. But it's said that she can burn down whole areas with a single breath if she feels like wrecking humans."

"She's certainly strong and scary, but if you properly discuss things you'll come to an understanding."

With Leo's sincere attitude, even enemies want to concede I guess.

You'd better take me along.

"Then, we have to prepare to climb the mountain and break through the cavern."

"Let's return to the town for now"

"So you'll go?"

Pickle stands up like a spring.

"I will guide you near the town!"

"Sorry"

"Keika-san, see you later"

"I'll pick you up here tomorrow."

"Yes, I'll wait"

With our backs to Leo's voice, we returned to the town.

--So, we'll go to negotiate with the dragon to help Leo.



We returned to the town of Kerkia late at night.

We sold the wolf 's furs and fangs for 8 small gold coins (40,000 yen) and returned to the inn.

When I returned to the room after having a meal, there was a knocking sound.

When I went to the door, it was the captain of the Order.

As soon as he entered the room, he came to my side and saluted.

"Sorry to bother you late at night. Thank you for scouting, Hero-sama. So, was there a relation to the fighting demons?"

"Let's see..."

I thought about giving a blunt response, but reassessed that it might be more credible if it is reported to the top brass by a commanding officer.

I spoke after I thought about it a little.

"The ones that where fighting were the dragon's subordinates and the Demon Lord's army."

"Oh. There is something like that?"

"And, according to the dragon's subordinates, Leo stole a treasure and they captured him to get the hiding place out of him."

"Su, such a situation!?!... Is this true?"

"I will meet the dragon tomorrow for confirmation"

"Then, I'll bring a map of the dragon's dungeon"

"That'll help. On that occasion, could you arrange food and equipment for mountain climbing and for the dungeon?"

"Yes, as you wish! It'll be prepared by tomorrow morning!"

"Please do so... do you have any other information"

The captain thinks for a while.

"It has nothing to do with Leo's subjugation or the dragon, but the village chiefs gathered and talked something about building bronze statues... ah, the person with the bounty was transported to the neighboring country. The bounty will be paid as soon as the face is confirmed."

"Is that so. Then, distribute the money to the villages through the knight order. And don't forget my name"

"Yes! Of course, Hero-sama! Then, I'll excuse me!"

The captain saluted and left the room.

--Overall everything seems to proceed as expected.

All I have to do now is to meet the dragon and get her to cooperate

There's even a map, so it should be easy.

When I sat down on the bed, Celica lively grabs my leg as she sits down next to me.

"You seem to have fun, Keika-sama"

"You know?"

"I'm always by your side after all. And also in the future"

She leans against me while saying this.

I speak while I gently embrace her shoulder.

"Yes, please do. Just having you nearby motivates me the most, Celica"

"Thank you very much. I'm also happy"

Celica smiled with her whole face.

Overcome by the awkwardness of the sudden embarrassing situation, I lied down while hugging her delicate body.

Celica's cheeks are flushed red.

"*Hyaa!*"

She let out a small shriek. Her blond hair and red skirt were disheveled from a light struggle.

But she soon calmed down. The fragrance of flowers and the warm softness are calming my mind.

Minya and Lapisia also snuggled up to me. Their thin legs are entangling me.

I thought that the body temperature of the children was high, but the fatigue of the day left me and I soon comfortably fell asleep.

CHAPTER 55

DRAGON DUNGEON (1ST FLOOR)

We left the town and first went to get Leo before we finally arrived at the entry to the dungeon halfway up the mountain.

The square-shaped entrance to the cave lies open in front of us. The floor and walls are covered with stone blocks.

"It's unexpectedly wide. Leo and I are going in front, the others are following suitably. Celica, please be careful not to lose Lapisia."

"Understood"

We slowly enter the cave in our group of seven.

The air inside was cool.

I touched the "Proof of Hero" and it illuminated the surroundings.

Leo squints beside me.

"This is convenient, as expected of a hero"

"The best part is that it doesn't deplete your magical power... I got a map up to half the way, we should be okay for a while."

"I'll leave it to you"

We advance while I look into the depths. Of course with "Truth Sight".

The dungeon was made by staking stones, but due to years, some pillars are bent and others are collapsed.

That there are no traps might be because they either already activated or are broken.

Leo speaks.

"It seems that something lives there."

I additionally invoked "Clairvoyance". Far ahead of the zigzag way are statuses popping up.

[Status]

Name: Cave Goblin

Attributes: "Earth"

Attack strength: 220

Defense strength: 110

Vitality: 150

Mental strength: 20

[Skills]

Slash: Attack by slashing at the enemy

Hit: Attack by hitting the enemy

Arrow Attack: Attack the enemy with a bow and arrows

They are smaller than people. Their forearms are long and their bodies are bent. Their skin is a mixture of green and brown.

The attack and defense values were somewhat fluctuating depending on the equipment.

"Hmm, there are cave goblins in there."

"...How do you know that?"

"Intuition. Rather, are they strong?"

"They aren't strong but are troublesome in crowds."

It seemed like the Cave Goblins were talking, so I activated "Attentive Ears".

"Women, I smell women"

"Soft Delicious"

"Men are there"

"Men disgusting Kill"

"Women More comrades"

The goblins are holding rusty swords and axes.

-- There is no room for discussion.

I pulled my sword as I spoke.

"They are laying in ambush two corners ahead, so be careful. There also is a hidden door inside. Once the battle breaks out, go to the back."

"As expected of Keika-san, huh"

While Leo was amazed, he pulled his sword.

Minya grabs her kitchen knives and Celica also draws her slender sword.

Then we turn around the corner. The passage was blocked. There is a thick wooden fence.

"Kiee!"

It seems that the shout acts as a signal, then arrows come flying. Two arrows.

Leo and I rush forward and cut the arrows down.

Three goblins came out from a gap in the fence in front.

"*Ha!* --'Ray Slash'!"

Leo made a big step forward, sweeping sideways with a flash.

The heads of two goblins are flying.

I take a step upward and swing down.

--'Moon Water Slash'!"

zann!

Blue light cuts through the space.

The two goblins in front of me are cut diagonally from their shoulders.

Furthermore, the fence behind them was crushed--, and without losing any momentum, even a goblin who holds a bow is cut together with the shield that he was hiding behind.

"Leo, I leave the rest of the bows to you, I watch your back"

"Yes"

Leo was already rushing forward as I spoke.

I turn around.

The hidden door opened with a *gagonn*.

Goblins with swords and clubs come out from inside.

Dark straightens up his back and opens his book.

He chants while scraping up his hair with one hand.

"Aria magic circle activate... 3 4 11 --'Flame Ball'!"

Red, green, and white magic circles were building up before him and shone.

doonn!

A violent explosion occurred in the center of the goblins who came out.

Along with a burst of flames, many are burned to a crisp.

The remaining three goblins are surprised.

Two shadows are dashing forward.

The first belongs to Tilt, whose green hair is fluttering.

"I'm here!"

Tilt had a smile floating on his face as he punched.

His 'Flame Fist' roars upwards.

A violent *bang* echoes.

The face of the punched goblin disappeared as if it exploded.

Next, Minya's kitchen knives are shining white.

"*gugya!?" "*gyagya!?"

Using her two sword style, the necks of two goblins were cut off.

As she turned her white robe around and she leaped backwards, blood splashed from the cut necks.

She waves the kitchen knives to remove the blood and puts them into their sheathes. Her ears are standing.

"That's it"

Tilt returns while looking unhappy.

"Dammit. I could only defeat a single one. Dark, leave some for me too"

"Yeah yeah. I'm sorry for being strong"

I directed my eyes to the front. Leo had already finished off the bow users.

"I guess they weren't anything to speak of to you"

Leo smiles while being amazed.

"You're the right one to say that when you simply cut right through the fence. Originally it was a pincer attack so I even thought it might be tricky"

Celica who came next to me speaks with an admiring voice.

"There wasn't anything for me to do"

"Just protecting Lapisia is more than enough"

I stroked Celica's head. Her cheeks were dyed red as she nodded.

"I'll do my best..."

"No one seems to be injured.--Shall we go?"

"Yes" "Understood" "Let's go"

We went deep inside.

The Cave Goblins seem to have driven out the other monsters, so we arrived at the stairs in the innermost part without meeting any enemies.

The stairs were in the center of a room that was about the size of a classroom.

I look at the second floor with "Clairvoyance".

"Hm? What's that?"

When I tried to look at it with "Clairvoyance", the image changed in rapid succession.

It feels like changing channels on TV.

I check with "Truth Sight".

[Changing Floors] The floors are randomly changing, reflecting the intention of the creator.

"So the guide and map are useless from here?"

"What happened?"

"It seems to be a different dungeon each time, probably by the will of the dragon who is the master here"

"Eh... this is very dangerous"

Leo said with a serious face.

"So that means it can be said that I could only reach him because he let me in, huh"

"Yeah, it might become a little troublesome from now on"

--Yup, it might have backfired to take Leo along.

I guess I have to fight within the limits of a hero.

I spoke.

"Well, it can't be helped. We have to go up anyways. Let's go."

""Yes""

To everyone's reply, we climbed the stairs.

Then, just when we arrived on the second floor, a faint sound confirmed the change of the floor.

CHAPTER 56

SNAKE AND RATS (DUNGEON 2ND FLOOR)

After we got up to the second floor, we were in a room that was about the size of a classroom.

There was no door between the room and the passage.

Unlike the first floor, the stones in the dungeon are crack-free.

I looked around.

"Oh, immediately between the room and the passage is a trap. Sleeping gas, huh... Minya, can you deactivate it?"

"I'll try."

Her black Hakama swings as she walks forward.

She crouched down on the floor right in front of the trap and started to deactivate it.

Meanwhile I looked at the passage with "Clairvoyance". It is about 3 meters wide.

This floor looked like a maze. There are also many rooms.

There are no traps in the passage itself, they are installed between the rooms and the passage.

There wasn't anything eye-catching inside the rooms. There were also no doors.

Just when I was wondering about the reason, I understood.

Because I caught sight of a giant snake that was moving through the passage.

[Status]

Name: Crystal Boa

Attributes: "Water"

Attack strength: 800

Defense strength: 9999

Vitality: 3600

Mental strength: 100

[Skills]

Swallow: Swallow enemies in whole.

Winding: Constrict an enemy and make it faint.

Compression: Crush opponents. Area attack.

[Passive Skills]

Magic reflection: Reflect magic and return it to the opponent.

Damage reflection: Return three times the received damage to the opponent.

"A huge snake is crawling through this passage. It seems to be a Crystal Boa."

Leo speaks with a voice filled with surprise.

"Such a dangerous demon is... how do you know that?"

"Intuition. Rather, is it strong?"

"Yeah, it's a serpent covered in crystal scales and above reflecting magic, they are extremely hard."

Certainly.

I wonder if at least Lapisia's and mine attacks will go through.

It can't be defeated normally.

The many rooms are probably to evade the snake and let it pass.

Because the entrances to the rooms are only wide enough for a person, the snake can't get inside.

"It seems to take some time to clear this without cheating... Conversely, because the snake is half as thick as the passage, it is best to defeat it from behind."

"As expected of you, Keika-san..."

Astonishment and amazement were mixed in Leo's voice when he spoke.

There were still two more opponents on this floor.

Huge rats called "War Rat" are pacing around the roots of so called "Fungus Plant". Mushrooms are growing from the stems.

The plants increase by the excrements of the snake and rats, the increased plants are then eaten by the rats and the rats are eaten by the snake. There seems to be such a cycle.

The Crystal Boa moves through the passage at a considerable speed and snaps at one of the rats.

"*kyukiiii!!*"

The death cry of the rat echoes through the passage.

Celica asks with a pale face.

"Wh, what was this sound just now...?"

"Most likely, the Crystal Boa just ate a War Rat. There are also demon plants called 'Fungus Plant' after this, so be careful."

Dark pushes his glasses up and speaks.

"Fungus Plant... they scatter spores when attacked. The probability is at 80%. --I'll burn them all down."

"Then, I'll leave it to you."

Minya stands up.

"Deactivation, finished"

"You did it even though it was your first time. Just as expected of your father's daughter."

"n..."

Her tail swung happily when I stroked her black hair.

"Then, let's go"

I and Minya took the vanguard when we started to walk.

Everyone follows.

The passage width is about 3 meters.

The sound of wooden clogs echoes.

The passage bends several times.

Since I could look at it with "Truth Sight", we walked straight without losing our way.

Just when we advanced to the right at the end of a T-junction, I spoke.

"Hm, rats are coming from the front."

"...we'll take them down"

The rats are running in front of us. Even though they are called rats, their huge bodies are one meter large. Because they are also fast, they look like rushing gray rocks.

I and Minya prepare our weapons.

Then Tilt raised his voice from the last row.

"I! I'll do it! I couldn't fight at all before!"

"No, there are also two coming from the left of the T-junction behind us. Please take care of them."

"Really?!... Ha, it's true, I can hear foot steps. You knew that, amazing!"

"Well, it's just intuition"

"Heh, is that so. Then, I'll do it! --Dark, don't get in my way!"

Tilt returned to the T-junction, created flames on his fists and feet and took a stance similar to a Shaolin.

Dark shrugs his shoulders.

"Yeah yeah. I'll take a rest"

Celica spoke.

"Everyone, War Rats have poison. Be careful of the fangs and claws"

"Leave it to me! I won't let them touch anyone!"

Tilt looked back at us, letting his white teeth shine.

The mice in front of us approached.

--'Water Blade Grant'"

My sword and the kitchen knives are glowing blue.

I swing down from the top.

With a *za!*, I cut through the torso. It's split right in half from the head.

"*kiii!*"

The rat's death agony echoes in my ears.

I turn the sword and cut another one, this time from a low position upwards. It was

slightly misaligned and the upper half was blown off.

The rat next to it kicks the ground and flies forward.

Minya fearlessly rushed in. She avoids the upper body and thrusts one kitchen knife into the rat's wide opened mouth while she cuts the underside of the neck with the other one.

Blood splatters to the floor but Minya has already dodged it.

She turns to the side of the rat and cuts off the legs as they pass each other.

"*ki!* *kiii... gopogopo*"

The rat fell to the floor and a mixture of blood and bubbles are coming out from the its throat while it spasms for a while.

I shook my sword, put it in the sheath and looked backwards.

Tilt was dashing towards the two rats just at that moment.

"Ha!"

He yells and unleashes a kick.

He hit the lower jaw of a rat and it flew up at the ceiling. The rat is struggling as it is covered in flames.

He moves further, as if his feet are dancing.

His feet leave a trail of red flames.

It's a continuous attack with "Burst Dance".

He kicked the other rat in the side.

The massive rat soars up higher than his head. The fur is burning.

"Haaa!"

Along with a yell, Tilt thrusts with his blazing fist.

zodonn, a sound like a cannon resounds as the rat is blown off.

"*kiiii!*"

It shrieks while it is flying into the passage's depths. At the end it hits a wall and is smashed.

"Last!"

He aims at the ceiling and the remaining rat falls down. It struggles with its feet midair.

Tilt lets out a burning fist.

"Ha!"

zuunn!

Again, accompanied by a roaring sound, the rat flew away while becoming a lump of meat.

It crashed into the wall and got stuck. Smoke rose from the smashed corpse.

Tilt took a deep breath.

The flames at his fists and feet vanish.

His green hair springs up as he raises his head.

"That's about it. Am I not strong when I get serious?"

While Minya guts the rat she defeated, she absent-mindedly speaks.

"With that technique, the fur is spoiled. It can't be used anymore"

"Shu... , shut up! Defeating them should be enough!"

Dark sighs.

"Please tell him more. How much has been wasted? "

"Don't mind it, Dark. Isn't it alright. Tilt helped after all"

Leo smiles as he mediates between them.

I ask Minya.

"You are even gutting the rats?"

"The fur can be sold when washed and dried in the sun. The meat can't be sold. But the internal organs and poisonous claws and fangs are expensive."

She packed the fur into a separate bag and put the poisonous parts into vials.

"Is that so. Then let's hurry once you're done. The snake picked up our voices and is coming here."

"Understood"

Minya's hands are speeding up. They look like four or five.

She collected two furs and four vials with poisonous materials before we went on.

The passage curves several times as we advance.

With "Clairvoyance", I could see that we were almost at the end.

When we go right at the last crossroad, we'll reach the room with the stairs.

But, the snake came.

"The snake is coming from the left. It'll catch up to us if we enter the passage leading to the stairs."

"Shall we enter a room and let it pass?"

I wrack my brain to Celica's question.

"The snake senses the temperature and chases the prey... no, shall I do it?"

"What do you plan to do?"

"Minya, is there any chance that you can make use of the Crystal Boa?"

She strongly nods.

"No matter the snake, as long as the neck is cut off I can skin it. The meat is delicious similar to chicken."

"Heh. Then, everyone, please run into the right passage. Hurry!"

"Yes" "Okay"

Everyone dashed towards the crossroad.

I sprinkle some water from my gourd as I walk.

"--Oh water, spread and cover me"

The water spreads like a cloth and covers me.

I hide my body temperature with this.

The snake moves faster when everyone enters the passage to the right.

It turns around and chases after them. The dungeon shakes under the ringing sound of *gogogo*.

I swing my sword from above.

--'Wind Blade Grant'

The snake passes through the crossroad in front of me.

"Phew!"

I swing down in one go.

zaAn!

I cut off the head that is about one meter long from the face of the snake.

The snake stopped moving after still advancing several meters from its momentum.

"*ShaAAA... *"

A mixture of the sounds of flowing blood and its death agony resounded.

Because it was killed instantly, the effect of damage reflection didn't come.

"Heeey, I killed it. You can come back"

They return in one line

Her Miko clothes fluttered when Minya came back first.

"Are you going to gut it?... I guess it will take some time"

"It's almost night. Shall we rest?"

She asks expressionlessly while only tilting her head a little. Her black hair waves.

"I guess you're right. --There is a room in the depth of the this crossroad. There is a treasure chest inside."

"What about traps?"

"There is a trap with a spear coming out at the entrance, the treasure box only has a lock"

"Understood. I'll deactivate it."

She took some defusing tools from the bag at her waist while she ran away.

I talk to Celica and Leo.

"So, that's how it is. We only go this far for today and rest"

"Yes, understood, Keika-sama"

"That's right, it would be better to take a rest. Even so..."

"Hm? What is it?"

Leo speaks with an amazed voice as he looks down at the snake.

"As expected of you, Keika-san. I didn't think there would be anyone who could defeat a Crystal Boa."

"Well, when you become a hero this should be possible at least"

I smiled and laughed.

Then we headed to the room together.

The inside is about the size of a classroom.

There is a treasure chest in the center.

Minya was crouching while showing her white thighs coming out from her black Hakama.

"Yes. Deactivation complete."

She stands up while putting the defusing tools back into the bag at her waist.

"This helps, well done, Minya"

"Yup"

Because she turned her head towards me I stroked it. Her ears are moving while her throat releases some purring sounds.

Then.

While I was stroking her, she suddenly began to strip off her Miko clothes.

Her white thighs and swelling chest that is wrapped in underwear can be seen.

I hug her in confusion to hide her.

"Uwa! What are you doing, Minya!"

"Hm, I'm going to gut the big snake"

"Eh? Then why are taking off you clothes...?"

"I gutted big prey before. My whole body was full of bloodstains. So, there won't be any problems even if I'm covered in blood"

"Even so... is it necessary to be in your underwear---"

"This, is my swimsuit. So, even if I'm seen by others than you... it's okay. Or, is it bad?"

"Ugh... this feel... it's certainly a swimsuit. Then, I guess it's okay."

Minya sneaked out of my arms.

She took off her Miko clothes in a corner of the room and takes her kitchen knives. The delicate girl in her black bikini, the pointy ears and the flexible tail gives off a mysterious aura.

"Then, I'm off"

"Wait wait! Demons will come close because of the smell of blood. I'll go too."

"Okay"

"Leo, you open the treasure chest. Celica, you'll set up the camp"

"Yes" "Understood"

Together, we returned to the snake and Minya pushed her kitchen knives out to me.

"Grant, grant.... individually please"

"Ah, yes--'Water Blade Grant'--'Wind Blade Grant'"

The kitchen knives glow blue and green. Minya immediately started to gut the snake. She skins it and cuts up the meat.

The ten meters long snake is rapidly taken apart.

Midways, some rats came and I disposed of them.

Thus the serpent became our dinner.

We turned the empty treasure box in the room into a cooking stove and baked the meat. An aromatic smell hung in the air.

The texture of the snake was similar to chicken but the taste was rich like duck.

Celica opened her blue eyes wide in surprise after she put it nervously into her mouth.

It overflows with magic power and vitality. It seems to have good abilities for potions.

We made the surplus snake meat into preserved food.

By the way, the magic reflecting skin seems to be a very expensive material for knight's armor. Normally, the shed skin is used though.

CHAPTER 57

ONE NIGHT IN THE DUNGEON

We had finished our dinner on the second floor of the dungeon.

The contents of the treasure chest lies open before us.

There are gold coins and a slender sword.

Leo speaks.

"This was inside the treasure chest. What shall we do?"

"Hm--. Shall we split the gold coins? --No"

I looked at the sword with "Truth Sight".

[Frozen Rapier] Holy silver sword with ice magic sealed inside. Adds ice damage to attacks and freezes the target for several seconds. Can be used as a tool to call forth blizzards. Attack +230

"Oh. It seems this sword is called 'Frozen Rapier'. It looks strong"

"'Frozen Rapier'!? That should be a masterpiece made by the elven master craftswoman Deedora... I heard that it's been lost for a long time"

Celica opens her eyes wide in astonishment.

"The sword seems to be expensive, so how about leaving the sword to one party and the gold coins to the other?"

"Yeah, I guess that works best. --Dark, what do you think?"

"Even if you asked me... If you as a sword user want it, you have to decide, Leo. I'm fine either way"

"I also don't really need it--"

While Dark looks at Tilt, he pushes up his glasses, letting them sparkle.

"We know that even if you don't say it"

"Shut up! I just wanted to give my opinion!"

Tilt and Dark began to argue.

Leo had a bitter smile on his face as he took the sword in his hand and carefully observed it.

But he lowered his head and placed it before Celica.

"It's too short for me to handle. Also it's too light."

Of course the attack power itself is a strength comparable to the highest class so even if Leo would equip it, it'd make sense.

However, there is a high possibility that skills fail to activate when using unfamiliar weapons.

Even if the attack power is high, it can be fatal if a skill doesn't activate during battle.

Just as expected of Leo. He does a wise judgment without being blinded by greed.

"Then. Does Celica want to take it?"

Celica took it into her hand. Her blue eyes are reflected in the beautiful blade.

"...It's a wonderful sword. It's ideal for me. The weight is just right."

"Then it's decided. Celica takes the sword and you'll get the gold coins. And you'll get priority for the next good item."

"What are you saying. We're just tagging along so this is plenty. Thank you very much."

Leo replied faithfully and lowered his head. His blue hair flows smoothly.

I unconsciously smile.

--He's really a nice guy. I guess he'd make a good hero for sure.

It's just too regrettable that this world is in hard mode.

Dark spoke with a bitter smile.

"Well, I don't think there many items of such quality. The probability should be less than 1%."

"I wouldn't be that sure about it"

"Why do you think so?"

"Isn't this dungeon made for people who want to meet and talk to the dragon? But now the dragon is in a bad mood and doesn't want to meet anyone, so the difficulty level is skyrocketing"

"I guess so. --Ah"

"Exactly. Previously, the dungeon has been invaded by adventurers when it was set to easy mode. But now, that it's set to very hard, which should rarely be the case, there should be a whole bunch of untouched treasure chests. That's what I mean."

"...I see. I didn't think of that... I guess only a hero notices this apart from Leo. So the probability to find something good might be-- about 40%?"

"Now I'm looking forward to it! I don't care whether it's some band made of skin or gloves, but I want some weapon that just feels like *whoosh*!"

Tilt sticks out his fist. It is only protected by a wrapped leather band.

"I'm shocked. Didn't you listen? The difficulty is rising sharply."

"Yeah! Isn't this extra fun!"

"At least be careful not to run into any traps."

Dark shrugged his shoulders as he spoke.

Celica shook her blond hair and thanked everyone.

"Everyone, thank you very much for giving this to me. I'll be even more useful to Keika-sama and we'll definitely defeat the Demon Lord one day."

"Work hard" "You're reliable" "Whew! Give it you best, huge breast-nee-chan"

"Wh, wha. Hu, huge breast!?"

Celica's face gets bright red and she hides her chest with her arms.

Then Leo hit Tilt's head.

"That hurts! What are you doing, Leo!"

"It's wrong to criticize the appearance of people, Tilt. You also wouldn't like it if someone talked about your long ears, right?"

"Ah... yes... Nee-chan, I'm sorry."

Tilt honestly lowered his head.

Celica smiles while still hiding her chest.

"No, it's okay. This happens quite often."

"Well, Celica's breasts belong to me, so you shouldn't do this, Tilt"

As I said this, Celica's face was bright red.

"Ke, Keika-sama, please don't say something like that"

"That's unfair, Onii-chan"

"Huge breast!"

Suddenly Lapisia shouted.

Lapisia put her legs into her dress and makes bulges like breasts with her kneecaps.

This time, Dark's fist hits Tilt's head.

"See, it has a bad influence on young children when you say unnecessary things."

"*Tsk*! Everything is my fault?"

"Huge breast!"

The room gets noisy from the complaints.

I spoke up.

"Heey, we're inside a dungeon, so quite down! Take a rest instead. Just in case, we'll decide on the order for watch-keeping and then sleep in turns.

""""Yes""""

We decided the turns and then laid down.



Around midnight.

There was the rattling noise of rats in the distance when I woke up.

I thought, that they might scavenge through the rest of the snake meat, that we didn't take completely.

Because of the erected barrier, demons can't enter the room.

Currently, Dark seems to be on lookout and he sits facing the fire in the treasure chest while reading a book.

I quietly talk to him.

"Hey, Dark. It might be slightly rude to say it this way, but why did you became Leo's companion when you're that strong? You seem to think about your magic research the most."

Dark lifted his face from the book with a bitter smile.

"It really is rude, if you say it this way, but Leo's existence is equally interesting to sorcery.... --My life was once saved by Leo."

"Oh."

"At the time, when an epidemic spread widely, I was close to death and Leo risked his life to save everyone. I wondered why he can go through such lengths to help other people. I wanted to see how long he can keep up that hypocritical attitude."

"And in the end, you even attacked the country for Leo's sake and took refuge in a cave. Well, it's Leo. It looks like he really lives for other people."

"It's certainly troublesome. I can no longer mock him for being a hypocrite"

Dark's voice was filled with exasperation, but in reality he seems to enjoy it from the bottom of his heart.

I unconsciously let out a bitter smile.

"That internal conflict seems just like you, huh-- By the way, did you get that high level Job by yourself?"

"Yeah, that's right. I guess I don't like being tied down by common sense.... It's

different for Tilt though"

Then Tilt, whose back was facing the treasure chest, spoke.

"I recently got my Job changed by the saint"

"You're awake?"

"Elves have good ears, right?"

Tilt turns to us. His green hair hangs from his face.

"What kind of person is the saint?"

"She's an amazingly beautiful Onee-chan!"

"It seems that she changes the Jobs of everyone determined enough to defeat the Demon Lord into high level Jobs."

"Might she be a survivor of the Temple of Umo?"

The Temple of Umo.

It was the temple responsible for changing Jobs, and now it supposedly has been destroyed by the Demon Lord.

"That would make sense.... What about you Tilt, why are going that far, I wonder why you want to defeat the Demon Lord?"

phew, Tilt let out a sigh.

"We elves are desperately trying to recapture the World Tree from the Demon Lord."

"It was captured?"

"The occupying Demon Lord's army cut down the World Tree and are plucking the sprouts from the stump. We want to recapture it before it withers away. Or rather,

because we are dependent on the World Tree, we elves will slowly die out, should the World Tree disappear."

"So the elves are now acting individually?"

"...Most likely everyone is giving their all, there's no need to worry"

"Sounds hard. I planned to get there some day, so I'll take it back at that time"

"Heh, I won't expect anything. I'll take it back with my own hands"

Tilt boasted and then showed his back to us. His fragile back was seeming sad.

Dark coughed once and then spoke.

"Can I ask you something?"

"Sure, I don't mind. I don't know whether I can answer though"

"It's about that magic that cut my magic circles..."

"Rather than calling it cutting, it's more correct that I changed it into something else"

"Heh. What kind of technique is that?"

"Hmm. Think of it as..."

I told Dark the process while taking care not to leak my secret of being a god.

Dark listens attentively and asks further questions. He understood it quite well, just as one might expect of someone who even studied magic from different worlds.

Thus the night advanced.

CHAPTER 58

CELICA'S CONTRIBUTION AND LAPISIA PUNCH!

(DUNGEON 3RD TO 7TH FLOOR)

It became morning and we continued the capturing of the dungeon.

Huge ants were inhabiting the third floor of the dungeon.

They were living in symbiosis with caterpillars. It was a cycle in which the caterpillars ate the remains of the ants and the ants got nectar from the caterpillars.

Both the ants and caterpillars were weak and we easily broke through. There weren't any treasure chests to speak of.

We got a [Material: Vitality Core Stone] from the stomach of the killed queen ant.

The fourth floor was a graveyard.

Skeletons and apparitions showed up. They were weak.

We easily broke through. We got [Material: Bones of Ancient Creature].

Tilt's "Flame Fist" was very useful.

The fifth floor was a dungeon filled with water.

All the passages that were leading out of the room with the stairs were submerged in water, forming deep waterways with fishes that looked like piranhas swimming around.

The water was streaming inside the canals.

Stepping stones were scattered about.

Celica wrinkles her well-shaped eyebrows.

"It seems dangerous if you miss your footing"

"And even though we have to step on the stones, some of them have traps"

"I'll swim... shall I go first?"

Minya shows her black bikini top by slightly shifting her white robe.

The faces of the piranha-like fishes are about as large as human ones and they are jumping up and down at the water surface.

"That's not good. Those fishes are very fast. It's too dangerous."

Dark speaks.

"Shall I boil them with my magic?"

"It'll be difficult afterwards. It's dangerous if we fall... but the idea itself isn't bad. We can use something else"

"Wh, what is it, Keika-sama?"

I looked at Celica and smiled.

"Isn't this the turn for the Frozen Rapier?"

"Ah! I see! As expected of you, Keika-sama. I'll give it a try."

She unsheathed the rapier with a sound you'd expect coming from a string instrument.

She dips the tip of the sword that was formed of white frost into the water.

Dark speaks.

"Pour magic power into the handle"

"--*ya!*"

A small yell gushes out of Celica's red lips.

The thin blade glows white.

bakibakibaki!

Accompanied by a fierce sound, the water in the canal froze.

The fishes in the water froze as well.

Leo nodded in admiration.

"Such a power... as expected of the work of a master craftsman. It's wonderful"

"Ugh~, amazing! Now I want it after all!"

"Tilt, the probability that you'd fail is 99%. Celica can use it precisely because it's her. Don't be mistaken here."

"Meh, I already knew that!"

"Now we can walk without having to worry about the traps or the fishes. Well done, Celica"

"Thank you, Keika-sama"

Celica sheathes the sword while she looks slightly embarrassed with her cheeks blushing red from being praised.

"Well then, let's go. Don't step on the stones, there are traps."

""""Yes""""

We walk over the ice. It's pleasant without any enemies around.

There was a big room along the way.

Originally that room was connected to the passage through the submerged water, but now the floor was frozen white.

And in the center of the room stood a huge treasure chest that was about 4.5 meters wide and 1.5 meters deep.

"What's this, this is amazing! Is it filled with treasures!?"

Tilt's eyes sparkled as he ran towards the treasure chest.

Minya, who follows after him, mutters.

"--it's dangerous"

However, Tilt, who had his eyes stolen by the treasure chest couldn't hear her.

As soon as he touched the treasure chest, an electric current ran through him with a *buzz buzz*.

"*gya!*"

He fell and writhed about.

Minya who approached him looked down at him with expressionless eyes.

"--Idiot"

"*Kuu...!* Shut up!"

"Tilt!"

Dark's long coat was waving as he quickly approached.

Then, he hit Tilt's head without holding back.

"--*kya!* What are you doing!"

Dark pushes up his glasses and makes them sparkle from anger.

"Tilt,... now, do you know what you just did?"

"I only tried to open it a little--"

"If this room was still soaked, we all would've died from the electric current"

"Ah..."

Tilt was dumbfounded.

Lapisia approached with small steps and applied her hands.

"Cuuuuure"

Her bright voice seemed out-of-place.

Tilt recovered in an instant. However, his mouth remained half opened and he didn't seem to notice it in his state.

Then Tilt suddenly knelt down in Seiza on the floor.

"Everyone, I'm sorry!"

"This was really dangerous just now, so I'll apologize as well."

Dark lowered his head. His long hair was hanging down.

I urged them to stand.

"It's okay, please raise your heads. If it would've been really dangerous, either I or Minya would have stopped him. We had more than enough leeway. Now it should have become a good lesson to him."

"You already knew that, huh. As expected. Even so, we're really sorry."

Even Leo lowered his head.

--It's wonderful how they are earnestly apologizing for their companion.

I smiled and clapped my hands to change the mood.

"Well, he made a mistake and apologized, it should be over with that! --Then, let's open the treasure chest. This time Leo's party has the priority."

"As expected of you, Nii-chan! I'll be careful from now on!"

"Thank you very much, Keika-san"

We approach the treasure chest.

Minya stands up after she had already crouched down and deactivated the trap.

"Lock, opened"

"Very well.... Now then"

The heavy lid opened under the echo of a squeaking sound.

Tilt excitedly looked inside.

However, once it was fully opened, his eyes looked dead.

...Inside was a boat large enough for about ten people-- it was a gondola.

The hull was magnificently decorated. When I looked at it with "Truth Sight", I saw that it had an effect attached to it that made it unable to topple over.

"...I see. The proper way to clear this floor should have been to ride this."

"I guess we can't take this with us"

Leo smiled bitterly as he brushed up his blue hair.

Tilt sinks down on the floor.

"Somehow, now I'm really disappointed"

"You reap what you sow."

I nodded.

"In other words, it seems that the dangerous floors have means to clear them prepared. The proper way to clear the floor with the Frozen Rapier probably would've been to lower the temperature of the passage to dull the snake's movement."

"I see. Normally, it can't be defeated after all"

Lapisia came beside me with small steps while holding the egg.

She looks at me with her golden eyes in expectation.

"Ah, that. Thank you for healing Tilt."

"Yup! Work harder!"

When I stroke her head, she pleasantly turns her head. Her twin tails are swaying.

"Ah, sorry. Thank you for healing me."

Tilt thanked her as he stood up.

"Yup! Heal more!"

Lapisia sweetly smiled.

She seems to be happy to heal people. It's a good thing.

"Then, shall we clear this before the ice melts?"

""""Yes""""

To everyone's voices, we went back into the passage.

Even the boss-like demon seemed to be frozen and we could safely move ahead.

Then we arrived at the stairs and went up to the next floor.

Plants grew on the sixth floor of the dungeon.

The walls and ceiling were covered with twigs of plants and climbing plants.

At first I taught the others about the attacking flowers and plants but before long we simply eradicated them before I came to that.

We got our hands on a heap of medicinal herbs and detoxifying weeds and we also got some raw materials for holy water called "Holy Healing Grass".

We split them equally with Leo's party.

The seventh floor was a dungeon with armored knights.

When we left the room with the stairs, there was a large passage with a red carpet.

The passage is seven meters wide and the ceiling is high as well.

Knights of whole body armor are lined up on one side in regular intervals. The armors are hollow inside.

Additionally, barriers that separated the knights from each other were set up.

"These barriers are linked with the knights. It looks like we have to defeat them before we can advance further."

We approached the barrier with the foremost knight.

What's happening?

The knight moved and came closer step by step. When he arrived in the middle of the passage, he draws his sword and holds it in front of his face.

He stayed in that pose on the other side of the barrier.

Celica speaks.

"This is, the gesture a knight makes when he requests a one-to-one duel."

"I see. --So this means that we can't go forward unless we win against them in duels."

I looked at the knight with "Truth Sight"

[Status]

Name: Soul Armor

Job: Knight

Attributes: "Wind"

Attack strength: 350

Defense strength: 500

Vitality: 2

Mental strength: 400

[Skills]

Slash: A horizontal slash

Double Stings: Two stabbing attacks

Ray Slash: Horizontal line attack.

"It looks like those armors contain the souls of knights. They use knight skills."

"--They seem to be quite formidable in one-to-one fights."

Leo had a stern look on his face as he said this.

I tilt my head.

"They only have a vitality of two, but..."

"Might they be weak?"

To Celica 's question, I carefully looked at the armor.

There are small lights at the head and the chest. According to their status, they are 'Soul Core Stones'.

"I see. It looks like you have to destroy the 'Soul Core Stones' that are embedded in the armor. They are at the head and the chest. -- Celica, please show us how a proper knight responds to the request."

"Understood, Keika-sama"

Celica gallantly swings her blond hair and steps forward.

She unsheathes the rapier and holds it with both hands in front of her face.

It's a refined beauty you'd find in a picture.

The barrier reshapes and confines Celica and the armored knight.

Each of them are taking a stance-- then the knight moves.

He slashes diagonally from above.

Celica lightly thrusts the rapier with an enormous speed.

The point of the sword is blurred. She executes a double thrust.

The armored knight receives one of the thrusts with his sword but the other one pierces his shoulder.

Immediately, ice is spreading from the pierced location.

The knight's movements only stopped for two or three seconds.

But in a battle, two or three seconds of paralysis mean death.

"Ha!"

Celica steps in with a yell and unleashes a pair of thrusts.

She simultaneously penetrates the 'Soul Core Stones' at the knight's chest and head.

While the armor intensely shook, it held the sword in front of its face with both hands - and collapsed.

Celica responded with the same gesture and bowed to the armor.

"It was a good duel."

Together with her words of sympathy, the barrier was lifted with a *buunn*.

"Just as expected of Celica. She safely won. And the effect of the Frozen Rapier is truly terrifying."

"She really is strong. Even I might lose if we fought."

Leo spoke in admiration.

Celica bows and smiles.

"Keika-sama, Leo-san. Thank you very much for your words of praise. Please let me fight a little more to practice as a knight."

"Sure. I'll leave it to you"

Then she won five times in a row.

The opponents gradually grew stronger and the skills they used also increased, but Celica elegantly defeated them under the waving of her red skirt.

--Even so.

I noticed something strange.

"...Isn't the passage getting longer?

"Eh, really?"

"...The probability that it is getting longer is 99%"

At first we could see seven knights in the passage, but even though we advanced about 50 meters after defeating five of them, we couldn't see the end.

The armored knights are lined up in intervals of ten meters. There are six.

"There might be another condition... 7 knights... can it be"

"Did you notice something, Keika-sama?"

"It might be that each one of us has to beat one."

"That's certainly a possibility."

"Well, we won't know unless we try"

Tilt clutches his fists and steps forward.

"No, wait. Next is Dark."

"Why?"

"The opponents are getting stronger the further we advance. With that assumption in

mind, those with close-quarter attacks should go last."

Dark pushes up his glasses and holds his book.

"I see. That makes sense. If a high level knight makes a head start, there is a possibility that my invocation might not make it in time"

Dark steps forward in front of the armored knight and holds his book with both hands.

The barrier reshapes and the duel starts.

Before the armored knight moved, Dark straightened up his back and opened his book.

"Aria magic circle activate... 3 6 15-- 'Dark explode'!"

zuzunn!

A pitch black darkness rose like a flame from below the knight's feet.

The armor corroded the moment it was touched by the flame.

gigii! ... The armor collapses with a dull sound.

When Dark closed his book and put it in front of his face with both hands, the barrier disappeared and we could advance.

"There are five remaining. So it was like that after all-- I guess you should go next, Lapisia"

"Understood!"

"Give me the egg. You know what to do?"

"I'm fine!"

Lapisia gives me the egg and walks forward with small steps.

She clumsily clutches her fists and holds them in front of her face.

It's feels like a child who imitates an adult.

Traces of worry are written on Leo's face.

"Will she be okay?"

"Isn't it impossible for this small girl-- shouldn't we find a better way?"

"No, it's okay. She's the strongest among the people here directly after me."

"This is... she is stronger than Tilt and even I...? No matter who I look at it, the probability for that is 0%--"

"Well, it doesn't matter whether you believe it or not-- Lapisia, give your best. Break the glowing stones on the armor!"

When I called into the barrier, Lapisia nodded with a smiling face.

"Yup, understood!"

Then the battle starts.

Lapisia stretches out her hands and dashes forward. Her blue twin tails are fluttering behind her.

She only approached casually, but the speed was abnormal.

The knight can't keep up with her.

"*Eh!*"

She swung her small fists and punched the armor. Just the way you'd expect of a simple-minded child.

The armor is blown off with a roaring sound of *dogoo!*

sudooonn!

It crashed into the wall behind.

The armor was completely crushed flat.

Lapisia takes a small step back and bows while putting her hands together.

The barrier disappears with a *buun*, leaving only four remaining.

Lapisia runs up to me.

"Keika! Won!"

"Well done, Lapisia~"

I stroked her head after I passed the egg to her and she smiled with her whole face in delight.

Leo marvels with his eyes open from amazement.

"Hey Dark, what was that? What kind of magic...?"

"...With a probability of 99%, it was a purely physical attack. The probability that she isn't human is also at 99%"

"Why do I even try to defeat the Demon Lord..."

Tilt was dumbfounded with his mouth wide open when he spoke.

All I could do was to smile bitterly to the exposed secret.

Celica beside me had a troubled look on her face.

"Well, don't mind it, because Lapisia is exceptional in her own league. --Then, the next one should go quickly"

""Yes""

We also won the remaining fights with a surplus.

Tilt punches the armor with his "Iron Fist".

Minya danced lightly and cut the stones with her kitchen knives.

Leo breaks the stones with a wonderful sword fighting skill.

I easily chopped them along with the armor.

Then we arrived at the end of the passage.

There is a heavy double door.

Minya investigated it before she spoke.

"There are no traps and no locks"

"Is that so... then let's enter"

Even though we knew that it should be safe, we stayed on guard when we went inside.

CHAPTER 59

LEO'S DEATH BATTLE! (DUNGEON 7TH FLOOR)

We advanced on the seventh floor after we defeated the armored knights.

We went through the door in the back and came out at a place like a cathedral that was illuminated by the light of stained glass.

A red carpet covers the floor, filling the space that was about the size of a gymnasium.

In the back of the hall was a raised pedestal with an armored knight wearing a mantle sitting on top of it.

A voice echoed once everyone was inside.

"You've done well, you who have passed the trials. I will be your next dueling opponent. I can only be defeated with this sword. So, take this sword and fight me. The sword will be awarded to you if you win."

The armored knight then threw the sword after he spoke. It stuck in the middle of the hall.

It's a broad longsword. The blade glows bluish and lightning-like patterns are drawn on it.

I look at it with "Truth Sight".

[Sword of Lightning] Legendary sword forged by the god of thunder. Actually it's the standard equipment among the soldiers who guard the gods. There are a thousand but it is rare on the surface. Attack +250 Grants the special skill "Lightning Attack". Has the effect of "Plasma Explosion" when used as item.

"That seems to be a 'Sword of Lightning'"

"Sword of Lightning'!? That should be legendary sword... Isn't this appropriate for Keika-san? "

"No, I'm not good with double-edged swords-- also, I have this, so I don't need it"

I tap at the Tachi at my waist.

"I also don't need it. My fists are plenty"

"I also don't need it"

Minya absent-minded speaks.

"It can't be used for gutting."

"Going with that as the criteria... well, let's leave this to Leo"

"Understood, Keika-san. I'll do my best."

Leo removed the sword at his waist and headed to the center of the hall.

I speak towards his back.

"The 'Sword of Lightning' grants the skill 'Lightning Attack' that can be quickly used to give you a head start. After that you can pour in magic power to cause lightning."

"Thanks for the info"

Leo pulled the 'Sword of Lightning' out and set it up.

The knight stood up and spread his mantle.

He slowly descends the stairs.

[Status]

Name: Paladin Soul

Job: Heavenly Holy Knight

Attributes: "Water" "Wind"

Attack strength: 700

Defense strength: 500

Vitality: 7 (TN: aka seven "Soul Core Stones")

Mental strength: 800

[Skills]

Slash: A horizontal slash

Double Stings: Two stabbing attacks

Gale Sting: A thrust with intense wind. Long range attack.

Critical Strike: Attack that ignores defense values.

Multiple Stings: Unleash countless thrusts.

"The opponent is a Holy Knight, don't let your guard down"

"Yes, I know."

The knight approached Leo until they was about ten meters apart and presented his sword with both hands.

Leo adopts the same duel-requesting posture.

With a *buunn*, a barrier encompasses them.

-- I want to place my trust in Leo's victory.

I looked at Leo.

[Status]

Name: Leo

Gender: Male

Age: 20

Race: Human

Job: Sinner

Class: Swordsman Lv 30 Monk Lv 10

Attributes: "Wind" "Light"

[Parameters]

Muscle strength: 92 (3) Max 92

Agility: 90 (3) Max 90

Magical power: 64 (2) Max 70

Wisdom: 83 (3) Max 83

Luck: 20 (1) Max 50

Vitality: 910

Mental strength: 735

Attack strength: 524 (274 + 250)

Defense strength: 342 (272 + 50 + 20)

Magical strength: 211

Magical Defense: 230

[Equipment]

Weapon: "Sword of Lightning" Attack +250 Grants the special skill "Lightning Attack". Has the effect of "Plasma Explosion" when used as item.

Armor: "Glaring Armor" Defense +50 Chance to automatically evade single attacks

Accessories: "Ring of Dragon Protection" Defense +20. Halves fire damage. Resistance against abnormal states

[Skills]

Cut

Thrust

Chaotic cut: Continuous attack.

Ray Slash: Horizontal line attack

Maximum Saber: Slash that ignores defense. (TN: Formerly known as "Holy Wind Slash")

Heal: Heal injuries.

Remove: Erase poison.

Blurred: It makes your body blurry and makes attacks stronger.

Wind Protect: Increases physical defense.

I think he is strong.

It's harsh because he doesn't have a high level Job. His growth has already ceased.

...Should I have upgraded his Job?

--Hm? There is a skill I've never seen before among Leo's skills.

"Maximum Saber" and "Wind Protect" might be unique skills. I've seen "Maximum Saber" once.

When I thought about that, Leo moved.

He takes an overhead posture and dashes forward.

He moves fast like a gale. Did he already use "Lightning Attack"?

"Here I come--'Blurred' ... *Ha!*"

Leo's body looks like there are about three of him overlapping.

He invokes the magic while he attacks. He's pretty good.

"*nuu!*"

The Holy Knight can't respond in time.

Leo's sword hits his shoulder. Then it made a dull sound and broke one of the "Soul Core Stones".

"That was a really nice move. I'll give you praise for that--*funn!*"

The Holy Knight swings his sword. It strongly flashes and moves like an illusion.

"*ku!*"

Leo fends off the sword while he steps back.

The shock seems to have been transmitted into his hands and he looks like he'll drop the sword at any moment.

I shout.

"Don't receive that, evade it!"

"Ye, yes!"

Leo leaps to the side and unleashes a slash from there.

The point of his sword leaves a trail of light--"Ray Slash"

He cuts into the side of the Holy Knight and destroys one of the "Soul Core Stones".

"You're quite flexible.--How about this?"

The holy knight sets his sword up at his waist and unleashes it with all his strength. The point of the sword is pitching-- "Double Stings", huh?

Leo bends backwards to evade one of the thrusts.

But the other thrust aims at his heart-- it'll hit.

However, his body suddenly made a seemingly impossible turn and avoided it from that posture.

This seems to be the automatic attack evasion skill from the "Glaring Armor".

--It feels close to the repulsion of a magnet.

"*Ha!*"

Then Leo releases a thrust with lightning speed.

He pierces the stone in the center of the chest. This is the third one.

"Four more!"

"...I'm happy that you can entertain me! Shall I be more serious from now on?"

"That might be troubling! *Ya!*"

Then a fierce battle of offense and defense is unfolding.

Leo's slashes are only hitting inconsequential spots on the armor while he skillfully evades the Holy Knight's thrusts.

Nevertheless, finally he destroyed the "Soul Core Stone" on the shoulder. Three are remaining.

Only once, the sword of the Holy Knight pierced deeply into Leo's thigh, but it was restored with an invocation of "Heal" and he pulled through.

But the opponent is an almost immortal being. It doesn't know any fatigue.

The more the fight prolongs, the more disadvantageous it will be for Leo.

Dark, who watches attentively next to us lets out a deep sigh.

"It'll be dangerous if it continues this way. The probability for victory is 30% at best"

"What is the meaning of this, Dark! Don't you believe in Leo!?"

"I know that precisely because I believe in him."

Celica frowns with a seemingly sad face.

"The remaining ones are at the head, throat and back. All those places are difficult to hit."

"The head is still manageable... the throat will be difficult because it is tightly guarded. Moreover, it's hopeless because the opponent will never show his back."

"There has to be a way somehow..."

It might be possible if he's as fast as Minya. But because he isn't accustomed to the two-hand sword, it looks bad.

Do I have to go after all?

But for now I'll just watch over him.

I look at Leo's status as I am thinking.

Leo hasn't used "Maximum Saber" or "Wind Protect" even once. "Maximum Saber" is only useful if the opponent has a high defense so it can't be helped, but "Wind Protect" should be adequate.

--Why, why doesn't he use it? Did he forget to learn it?

I looked at Leo and shouted.

"Leo! Why aren't you using 'Wind Protect'!"

"Wh, what's that!?"

Leo shouts back at me while he evades the sword.

You don't know?

"Anyway. Just shout 'Wind Protect' while you use magic!"

The knight is bewildered.

"Wh, what!? You can use 'Wind Protect'!?"

Leo uses the opportunity and shouts.

--'Wind Protect'!"

zazaza!

A violent wind is dancing. It is blowing around Leo.

It was no ordinary wind. He was surrounded by countless blades of wind.

"*Ha!*"

Along with a loud yell, Leo steps into the Holy Knight's range.

From above, he slashes at the shaken up Holy Knight's head. The stone broke.

--It doesn't end with just that.

The surrounding blades of wind are cutting at the Holy Knight's back. The stone is broken.

With a "Oh!", I unconsciously let out a yell when I saw that.

"One left! Here I come!"

"Give it your all, Leo-chan!"

"Do it!"

Leo holds the sword in his hands and charges forward under the support of everyone in his back.

He picks up speed and weight for his finisher attack.

--"Maximum Saber"!

zuonn!

A dull sound echoes through the hall as the throat of the armor is penetrated.

The Holy Knight slowly falls to his knees.

"Well done, blessed youth. There is no cloudiness whatsoever in your clean eyes-- it's really regrettable..."

"Regrettable?"

"You should aim for even further heights"

"Huh?"

With a *garagara*, the Holy Knight collapsed.

At that moment, Leo's body shone.

Tilt shouts.

"Ugh, so bright!"

"Is, is this a Job change!?"

[status]

Name: Leo

Gender: Male

Age: 20

Race: Human

Job: Heavenly Holy Knight "Einherjar" (High Level)

Class: Swordsman Lv 31 Monk Lv 10

Attributes: "Wind" "Light" "Dragon"

"Oh... you got a high level Job. It seems you became a Heavenly Holy Knight 'Einherjar'".

"A dead knight that hastens to join the side of the gods, huh... I intend to stay alive though. Well, it can't be helped."

Leo spoke with a bright face.

"Congratulations, Leo-san"

"You did it, Leo!"

Celica and Tilt also give words of congratulation.

Then.

A heavy sound echoes and the door in the opposite direction from where we entered opened.

Stony stairs are visible.

I take the luggage and speak.

"Well then, let's go. We should be half way by now."

"Yes" "Very well" "Yup" "Understood"

Everyone replies.

Everyone heads leisurely towards the stairs.

CHAPTER 60

MINYA'S ULTIMATE COOKING!

(DUNGEON 8TH TO 10TH FLOOR)

The eighth floor was a dungeon with many treasure chests.

They were even scattered about in the normal passage.

But the majority of treasure chests contain monsters.

Well, with "Truth Sight" I can tell that immediately.

Probably because he learned his lesson at the water dungeon, Tilt doesn't get close to the treasure chests.

Dark was actually teasing him with that.

"Oh, Tilt. Aren't you going to open it?"

"Shut up!"

By the way, inside where mostly swords, shields and armors that looked like they were sold at stores.

It was only junk that could be bought with some small gold coins.

We returned everything except the medicine into the chests.

The ninth floor was a desert.

When we left the room with the stairs, we were in a huge desert of about one square kilometer.

There were scorpions, lizards and a 30 meters big Sand Whale.

Even though it was big, there was no way for it to win.

Lapisia pulled the whale out of the sand with her strength, Celica paralyzed it with her sword and the others showered it with blows.

According to Minya's wish, I and Lapisia held it at its head and tail and turned it around to drain the blood.

Next, Minya gutted it. We got whiskers, meat, skin, bones and other materials.

After that we had lunch.

Because we drained the blood, the meat didn't smell bad and it was actually amazingly delicious.



On the tenth floor were kitchens.

When we left the room with the stairs, there was a spacious and clean kitchen. It was fully equipped with a kitchen stove, a furnace, chopping boards and so on. It left nothing to be desired. There were even cake pans.

There was also another kitchen just like this one, and inside was a woman with rabbit ears who wore a chef's hat.

[Status]

Name: Gelato

Gender: Female

Race: Rabbit Man Race

Job: Cuisine Researcher

Class: Cooking Lv 68

68...

It's more than four times as high as Minya's cooking skill and one and a half times higher than the level of the imperial court's head chef Clarissa.

This is amazing.

A table and seats were in the back and a man with a large belly was sitting there.

He shouts when we enter.

"Gooolden, Cheeeef!"

A deathly silence fills the room.

With a *cough*, the chubby man cleared his throat.

"It must've been several tens of years since we had visitors. Just as you see, this is the kitchen. You have to prepare a meal and if it satisfies me more than the one made by my exclusive chef, the door to the next floor will open. Are you fine with that?"

--This is troublesome. It's not a fight?

I guess I could also simply threaten the man to open the door to the next floor... but...

As I looked beside me, Minya was practically piercing the kitchen with her eyes.

She fidgets while her tail stands from excitement.

There are countless cooking utensils made by the hands of masters. They are sparkling.

Just one of the kitchen knives is worth a house. Even a king can't arrange a kitchen with such tools lined up.

This is the kitchen every chef dreams of and yearns for.

--Might it be a good experience to her?

"Well, I guess we can just as well take on the challenge... Minya, can you do it?"

"I'll work hard"

Her ears are leaping upwards as she fires herself up.

The chubby man pointed at the back of the room.

"The ingredients are over there! Use as much as you want!"

A door opens with a *gogogo*, and white chilliness flows out.

Gelato, the Rabbit Man Race, is hopping into the room. *hop hop*

We also enter.

The inside was a magical refrigerator of the size of a warehouse.

There are meat, fish, vegetables, fruits. There were all kinds of ingredients.

Gelato casually selects her ingredients in an experienced manner.

Minya curiously wrinkled her cute brows as she picked out ingredients.

"There is so much... it's hard to choose."

She returns the meat in her hand to the shelf, takes dried scallops and scratches her neck.

I bring my face close to Minya's cat ears.

"Minya, the opponent's skill is amazing. We won't win if we do it upfront. Is it possible to make it with ingredients that are not here?"

"Not here...? Ah, there is no snake meat. If I remove the bones and crush them into chunks..."

"And I can make a matching sauce... maybe a demi-glace. That should go best with the light snake meat. Please taste-test it then."

"Demigla...? Understood, I'll leave it to you, Keika-oniichan"

"Okay, let's do it"

Using "Truth Sight", I pick high-quality meat and vegetables, cow bones and liquor, also wheat flour and butter, and we return to the kitchen.

I fire the stove and put the meat, vegetables, cow bones and finally the Sand Whale meat into a pot.

Then I pour water into it and boil it.

"--'Wind Compression'"

I boil it while I put pressure on the pan.

That way, the stew which normally takes days, is done in several minutes.

A nice fragrance is spreading out when I open the lid.

The meat and vegetables were mushy.

"*Ooh!?*\"", The chubby man at the other side of the room raises his voice in surprise.

Minya comes to my side.

"That smells nice. I've never smelled this before."

"How about the taste?"

I add liquor, sugar and salt and let Minya drink a spoon full of the seasoned soup.

Probably because of her cat tongue, she twitches and the fur on her whole body is bristling.

"It's hot... but, it's delicious"

"Then I'm glad"

I stir-fried butter and wheat flour in another pan and add an eye-balled amount of the mushy soup to it. I remove the bones and scales.

Then I put it on the fire again and boil it under magic pressure.

Meanwhile, Minya nimbly moved her kitchen knives.

She carefully removes the bones from the snake meat and minces it with her two sword style.

"Ooh", Gelato, who was watching Minya, spoke in admiration.

"That looks different from an ordinary adventurer. I get that you've properly learned the foundation. It's a well trained movement without any wasteful motions."

"I haven't helped in the inn for nothing.--I won't lose."

She has the pride of an innkeeper's daughter who worked hard in the capital for 13 years.

She first adds beef tallow and other meat to the snake meat, and then little by little breadcrumbs while she minces it again.

She sprinkles spices on the chopped meat and kneads it with her hands to make it round

She firmly made a dent the center.

After that, she leaves the stove behind, prepares a charcoal fire and begins to grill it over the flame.

The fat flowed from the hamburger steak and fell onto the charcoal, causing aromatic smoke to rise.

"Aah..."

The chubby man was turning in his seat.

Meanwhile, Gelato was bustling about the kitchen.

She made a meat tart and a seafood soup. She grilled a massive steak.

Then she garnishes it with colorful salad.

Minya seemed uneasy as her pointy ears were tingling.

"...should we make more?"

"No, it's fine. Even if we make more, there is no point if it isn't satisfying. We'll concentrate on this dish for now."

"Understood... I'll believe in you"

Minya returns to dedicate herself to the grilling of the hamburger steak.

My sauce was boiled down.

"Is it done?"

"Yes, it's nicely grilled."

I put the hamburger steak onto a plate.

I pour lots of demi-glace onto it.

The rich fragrance of the blending meat and sauce hangs in the air.

Tilt's stomach is grumbling.

"Ugh, it wasn't me--*au*!"

"That's unsightly, Tilt"

"Shut up!"

Tilt turned his red face as he retorted.

And then, Gelato's dish was also finished.

The meals are arranged on the table of the chubby man.

The man looked at it with shining eyes.

After that, he put on an apron with an agile movement you wouldn't believe with his chubby belly, picked up the fork and knife and started to eat.

"First is our cook"

He drinks the soup, cuts the meat and brings it to his mouth.

"Aah~, the taste is exquisite as usual. Es expected"

"I'm honored"

Gelato bowed. Her cat ears are drooping.

Next is the hamburger steak we made.

The chubby man's gaze is fixated.

"Hmm. I understand that you kneaded the meat into a round shape, but this sauce with its complex aroma is, just what is this...?"

He cuts the hamburger steak with his knife and covers it with the sauce before he brings it to his mouth.

At that moment the man's eyes opened wide.

"Mmh--! What a plump taste! The lightly compressed meat unfolds on the tongue and the rich sauce is like a twinkling star! It's like a fervent first love! An ardor that bursts

into flames from youth! Ooh--, from the mouth to the stomach, no, it's a sweet feeling that fills the whole body with life!"

The man exclaims while his hair is ruffled up.

There was no need to compare anymore.

His strong impression was well transmitted.

The man now really digs into the hamburger steak.

He finished it in no time.

The man courteously wiped his mouth with the hem of the apron and smiled.

"You pass. Wonderful--This is the first time that I was so satisfied after our chef began to cook the meals."

Gelato is coming to the table.

He scoops the remaining sauce with his fingertips.

"Excuse me a bit. --Hm! Th, this is a wonderful taste... Not just the meat, it's like various dishes are mixing... it's my complete defeat."

Maybe because he discovered new possibilities for dishes, his eyes were sparkling although he lost the match.

"Well then, you can go to the next floor."

The man was pointing at the side wall.

The wall opened and the stairs appeared.

--Then.

Minya brought a kitchen knife.

"This, can I have this...? Is it bad?"

I look at it with "Truth Sight".

[Peerless kitchen knife] Kitchen knife made of magic silver with a beautiful blade pattern. Sterilizes all ingredients during cutting. Offense +120. Effects of "Detoxification" and "Antisepsis".

The chubby man folds his arms and thinks.

"Hmm~, that is really precious..."

"I'll pay as much as you want for it. Won't you sell it to Minya?"

--It's definitely worth it if Minya wishes for it. I want it by all means.

"Hmm~. The craftsman who made it is already dead... that's right, how about you leave the recipe for the sauce and the ingredients to me?"

"Okay! We have a deal."

I took out the snake meat and the whale bones and lined them up on the table.

"Wow, those are the ingredients?"

"Meat of a Crystal Boa and bones of a Sand Whale. The rest of the ingredients were from the storage... and this is the recipe."

"What was that!? A Crystal Boa! They are just absurd to kill."

I taught the recipe to the impressed nodding man. I told them that it's necessary to boil it for at least a day if you don't use wheat and pressure.

"Heh. Well then, you didn't come here just for that. You should go now."

"Thanks for the business.

"Please come by at any time when you learn a new recipe."

"Can I come here immediately?"

"Hahaha, of course"

The man shook his plump belly and laughed.

Then we climbed the stairs.

Minya's ears are happily swinging from side to side along the way.

She holds the kitchen knife in its sheath close to her chest with both hands. It looks like she treasures it.

"Thank you, Keika-oniichan"

"You're always taking care of me. This isn't much."

Minya squinted her eyes and nodded when I stroked her head.

Then, Minya's cooking skill rose to twenty in one go.

Not only did she cook with the best tools and ingredients, she even sneaked a peek at Gelato's cooking skills and movements.

She only made one dish, so she could afford it.

Because you are recognized as grown-up in this world when you are Lv20 in any Job, Minya should have reached the point where she could make something like an inn.

I'm glad that we participated in the cooking competition because I can now eat even more delicious meals than before every day.

CHAPTER 61

CROSSING THE DUNGEON!

(DUNGEON 11TH TO 15TH FLOOR)

It's the third day.

The eleventh floor is a misty dungeon.

You can't see anything but one meter ahead.

Well, since I could use "Truth Sight", there was no danger of ambushes or anything.

And because I knew the location of the stairs when I used "Clairvoyance", we easily broke through.

There were no treasure chests.

The twelfth floor was a large hall.

Lots of stone pillars where lined up to support the ceiling.

There was a huge dragon.

"KishaaaA!". It let out a sharp scream and attacked.

However, it was no opponent before me. I easily crushed it.

We got some [Material: Holy Dragon Fang]. We equally shared them with Leo's party.

The 13th floor was a library.

All the walls were covered with bookshelves that were filled with books.

And there was a maze made out of bookshelves.

The enemies were skeletons and hollow robes with spiritual bodies.

They were easy to defeat.

The dungeon itself was easy, but Dark fell behind after we came here.

It was tough, because he looked at all the book spines.

It couldn't be helped, so we decided to spend the night even though it was somewhat early. Leo apologized.

Celica was sobbingly reading a fairy tale. She's sensitive.

It seems that some princess was only used by the prince and then abandoned. She said something like "How can a man be so cruel" while looking at me. Why?

Dark let out a strange voice at night. He got a "Different World Grimoire". It seems that he looked through all of the tens of thousands of books.

"Ahaha... this has even more power... haha"

Dark murmured with dangerous eyes, so I left him alone.

The next morning, we continued the capturing of the dungeon.

The 14th floor is a lava dungeon.

It's hot and annoying.

Magma Slimes are attacking from the lava pools. They are Slimes with intense heat and flames.

Celica's blizzard was helpful and we quickly advanced.

We got "Crimson Claws" from a treasure chest. There were four deep red claws that

could be attached to the back of your hand.

I thought that they might be most suitable for Tilt, but the person himself declined saying "I rather punch with my fists".

Ultimately, I forced them onto him.

So far Celica has become Lv 30 and she learned "Full Moon Cut". It seems that it is a defense ignoring attack that carves a perfect circle into the opponent.

Minya became Dance Warrior Lv 21, Thief Lv 10 and Cook Lv 20.

She learned [Clear and Serene] Negates negative effects on yourself, and [Stealthy Steps] Act without the opponent noticing.

I also learned "Lightning Blaze", a superior version of "Thunder Flame".

It seems to be a unique magic for heroes that uses fire and lightning. I probably won't use it though.



Then, the 15th floor.

It was a very quiet dungeon. Golems made of stone were silently roaming about the passage that was about five meters wide.

While fighting, we advanced through the dungeon without any problems.

Actually, my wooden clogs made the most noise.

"*deya!*"

I swing my Tachi.

I chop at the Golem.

I crush the central part of the Golem that contains the "Core".

With a rattling sound, the Golem returned to debris.

When I looked at the part that was the sole of the foot, rubber was attached to it.

It silenced it perfectly. I collect it.

--Then.

Minya pulled at a sleeve of my clothes.

"Hm? What's up?"

"The Golem's core, can be sold."

"Ah, I see. I guess I can defeat the Golems without breaking the cores"

"Yup"

Minya strongly nods and happily swings her tail around.

After that, I defeated them without damaging the center.

Thanks to that, we got a number of intact "Cores", that were the central part of the Golems.

Then we arrived at a T-junction.

The stairs to the left are leading to the next floor.

At the end of the passage to the right was a room with a Golem that had a different atmosphere from the ones before.

I look at it with "Truth Sight"

[Status]

Name: Gigant

Race: Magic Golem

Attributes: "Hard Earth" "Magic Light"

Attack strength: 4800

Defense strength: 3500

Vitality: 6000

Automatic recovery: 1000

[Skills]

Grinding: Equally pulverizes armor and rocks to hide behind.

Compression: Crush opponents. Area attack.

Explode Crash: Shock wave attack. Can be used at long range.

**Spinning Attack: Attack by stretching the arms out and spinning around.
Continuous attack.**

Its strength is on a complete different level.

Moreover, it has automatic recovery.

I guess the correct strategy would be to ignore it without beating it.

However, there is a golden treasure chest in the back of the room and I can't see inside even with "Clairvoyance".

"If we go to the right, there is an abnormally strong Golem. It probably won't use anything but defense ignoring attacks. It is guarding a golden treasure chest."

"Sounds like fun"

"Let's do it!"

Since everyone was eager to do it, we headed to the right.

Tilt bends his neck and stands imposingly.

"We~ll, shall I do this alone?"

"Ah, Tilt, you'll go to the back and serve as support because your attacks won't go through."

"What was that!?"

I ignore the shouting Tilt and give out instructions.

"Leo and Celica will use defense ignoring attacks. Dark will p r otect you with magic. Lapisia will invoke 'Decline' to lower its defense. Minya will disturb it and open the treasure chest when she finds a gap. Tilt will also disturb it.

"Roger!" "Understood" "Let's do this" "Yes" "*Bufuu~*"

One person seems to be dissatisfied but I don't mind.

Thus we challenged the Golem to a fight.

Leo's and Celica's swords are sparkling and Dark invokes magic for defense and speed.

Lapisia works hard to invoke defense reduction. Every time she casts it, the defense is reduced by one percent.

Minya took advantage of her speed and toyed with the Golem.

I was closely watching the fight.

I wasn't just playing around, I was searching for the Golem's core with 'Clairvoyance'.

The huge body is made of magic silver, so there must be a core with high magical power to move such a heavy body.

It didn't work though because the magic silver was interfering and I couldn't see the core.

Then I saw through the flow of the magical power.

There is one in each thigh respectively. And there is one at the right side of his stomach--around where the liver would be in humans.

I slowly unsheathed my Tachi and rushed forward.

--'Water Blade Grant'

I horizontally slash at the Golem.

I cut it near the chest area and send the top half flying.

Even though it became only the lower part, the Golem was still moving around.

I further cut it at the joint of the legs.

ha!

I cut the magic silver with the point of my Tachi.

The core from the liver area rolls out.

I aim at a thigh.

"Celica, aim at the thigh with 'Full Moon Cut'"

"Yes, Keika-sama!"

We simultaneously scooped out the cores from the thighs.

The Golem stopped moving with a *shuuun... *

Dark speaks with amazement.

"To cut through magic silver even more easily than through stone..."

"Well, that's because Lapisia lowered its defense capabilities."

I came up with a suitable answer.

Then Minya, who was already working on the treasure chest, spoke.

"It's open"

"Oh, let me see!"

Everyone looked at the treasure chest.

When we opened it, there was a huge hammer with a long handle inside and the hammer emitted a rainbow-colored light.

[Create Hammer] Puts magic power into produced weapons. Attack +100

"This seems to be a 'Create Hammer'. Does anyone have a use for it?"

Dark replies to my question.

"It's a tool for a blacksmith. I don't need it."

"Same here. Our party has already plenty."

"We also don't need it. Shall we sell it and turn it into money?"

When I said this, Lapisia suddenly raised her voice.

"Selling, don't"

"Hm? Will you use it, Lapisia?"

"Don't need, but selling bad!"

"But there's no point in having it when no one is using it"

When I admonished her, Lapisia throws herself down.

"No--! Bad--! NoooooO!"

Lapisia throws a tantrum. The dungeon is shaking.

--What is this, this is troublesome.

However, Lapisia was always disinterested when we distributed treasures until now, so there might be some reason. Is it because she's a god? Or is it related to earth?

"Leo, can we give the hammer to Lapisia? I'll pay for it"

Leo smiles and shakes his head.

"No. You let me earn more than enough already, so please give it to Lapisia-chan. Just the materials we got are worth enough to live and play around for a year."

"Is that so. Sorry, Leo-- Here, Lapisia. Carry it yourself."

"Hooray!"

Lapisia happily takes the huge hammer.

She sends out a Hammer Kick and a Hammer Punch.

Lapisia smiles while looking at the hammer.

"Color, beautiful"

"You like the rainbow color, huh?"

Well, whatever.

Let's say it's a reward for her hard work until now.

I looked around the room.

Minya and Tilt stuffed the Golem's core and the magic silver into their bags.

"Well, shall we go already?"

"Yes"

We headed to the next floor.

But as we climbed the stairs, we saw the light of the sun.

It looked like we broke through the dungeon.



The mountain's peak.

The blue sky spreads and a strong wind blows.

A sea of white shining clouds is below our eyes.

I let out a sigh of relief.

"We finally got out, huh..."

"Thank you for your hard work, Keika-sama. It was arduous, wasn't it?"

"The difficulty itself was easy, but it was long after all"

Leo shakes his head with a faint smile.

"No matter how I think about it, I thought it was most challenging"

Dark shrugs his shoulders while he turns away.

"Honestly, the breakthrough rate should be less than ten percent."

"I can't say anything but that I'm amazed..."

Tilt also shrugged his shoulders as he raised his hands.

Minya and Lapisia are speaking.

"I want to take a bath"

"Bath, bath!"

"Yeah, you're right. After we returned hom--hm?"

"What is it, Keika-oniichan?"

I looked at Lapisia's egg without replying to Minya's words.

The egg should have been a pitch black ball, but now there are jagged, white lines. It is a pattern resembling a watermelon.

"Lapisia, did you do something to the egg?"

"Hm? I warmed it!"

"Is that so"

I looked at the egg.

The description "Evolution Egg" hasn't changed.

However, the content had changed when I looked at it with "Clairvoyance".

The pitch black demons inside were still changing rapidly like the reels of a slot machine, but there were other creatures mixed in between.

--A Pegasus, a White Dragon, a Seraphim.

Is the content affected because Lapisia is a god?

"I think it's getting interesting. Lapisia, keep warming the egg."

"Yup, understood!"

Lapisia briefly answered and held the egg while she twirled around.

Then Leo came with his hair disheveled by the wind and spoke.

"Well then, Keika-san. The dragon is over there"

"Leo pointed at a very large double door. On the surface was the relief of a dragon that breathed fire."

I turned my head and spoke.

"Then, let's quickly finish this."

"Yes" "Understood" "Let's go"

We pushed the door open and went inside.

CHAPTER 62

DRAGONS DISCUSS IN A PHYSICAL LANGUAGE!

We entered the cave where the dragon lives at the top of Green Mountain.

The inside was sultry and moist.

It seems that there is some heat source inside the cave.

The ceiling got higher the further we advanced and the the road is now wide as well.

Then we came out at a large place about the size of a soccer stadium.

The sun is shining in.

The wall in the back had a large hole in it that connected to the outside. We can see the blue sky.

And right in front was a huge body that was crouching with it's wings folded up. Just the body alone was bigger than an average house.

It was a dragon with beautiful, emerald scales.

The dragon emitted a hot aura and because the aura filled with anger was so hot, her huge, green body was shimmering through the heat haze.

I unconsciously let out a sigh.

"Heh, she's amazingly beautiful. Her whole body looks like a jewel."

"Yes. She's truly magnificent."

Celica also answered with an impressed voice.

However, the dragon stretched out her long neck and bared her fangs.

"Why did you come, oh foolish humans!"

Leo swings his blue hair and steps forward.

"Please wait, Dragon-sama! Please listen to what we have to say! I'm Leo and you have helped me in the past!"

"This is stupid! Oh lowly humans! Apologize to me with your death!"

The earth was rumbling as the dragon approached peremptorily.

[Status]

Name: Aurora

Race: [Divine Race] Fabula Dragon

Job: Dungeon Master

Attributes: "Strong Light" "Grace"

Attack strength: 21000

Defense strength: 16000

Vitality: 65000

Mental strength: 43000

[Skills]

Fangs: Attacks one line of opponents.

Claws: Attacks one line of opponents.

Tail: Attacks all opponents.

God Blaze: Covers all opponents in flames of conflagration.

Planet Blaster: Heat attack that can blast away a continent.

[Data]

Uses various magic in addition to her skills.

Three-staged attacks.

Hmm. She's strong, just as expected of a Deity. What's a Dungeon Master? Is it that,

which can be often found in games?

She has the strength to eradicate humans in one blow.

--Well, she's no opponent before me.

I shout while I casually step forward.

"You guys, stay behind me! --Lapisia, watch out from above!"

"Understood!"

"Youuu! You should be in despair before a dragon's power!"

The dragon vigorously rushes forward.

--'Water Blade Grant'

I swung my Tachi and hit her chin with the back of its blade.

With a dull sound, the dragon fell backwards.

dooon...!

The dragon was slapped into the ground, showing her belly.

The mountain shook.

The dragon opens her eyes wide.

"Wh, what's this! You threw me over?!"

"Yeah. Do you now understand the level difference a little?"

"Argh..... I shall be on the same level as a human?! --Huh!"

Suddenly the eyes of the dragon focused.

She was looking at Lapisia.

Then the dragon suddenly rose, spread her wings and charged forward, aiming at Lapisia.

"Give it baaaack!!"

However, the dragon couldn't reach Lapisia.

"What are you doing, I'm your opponent."

"Wh, what was that!?"

I push the back of the blade of my Tachi into her thick belly and scoop her up.

zu, zuuu... nn!

The dragon was stronger than before slapped into the ground.

The mountain shook and several pieces from the cave's ceiling crumbled down.

The falling rocks hit the dragon's huge body and broke apart.

Leo and the others were dumbfounded and opened their eyes wide.

"What the hell... just what's going on?"

"He's using magic, but... it should be impossible! According to my calculations this shouldn't bring forth that much strength!"

"I'm already getting tired of surprises by now..."

Celica brings her hands to her chest and mutters like a little girl.

"Just as expected... Keika-sama"

Minya is expressionless but her ears are joyfully moving.

Lapisia is enjoying herself while she smashes the falling rocks with Jumping Punches.

Not surprisingly she didn't use the hammer.

The dragon was also stunned with her eyes wide open.

I approached the lying dragon while putting my hands on my hips.

"Do you get it now? That you can't win. So, you won't say any uncalled-for things anymore?"

When I gave the warning, the dragon spoke telepathically.

Only other gods or own Mikos should be able to telepathically talk to a god, just as expected of a Deity that has lived since ancient times.

Though there is lots of noise.

"*zaza*... can it be... *zazaza*, might you be a god? *za*-- that girl as well"

--Oh, you finally realized it? That's right. I'm a god from a different world and that girl is Lapisia. She's Lupersia's daughter.

"What! *zaza*... I'm terribly sorry. My anger has, *za*... clouded my eyes."

--Don't worry. Everyone makes mistakes.

From here on I spoke aloud because it was necessary to let everyone hear it.

"So, why were you so fixated on Lapisia and aimed at her?"

"...The eggs that I was warming... were stolen"

"Oh? Might this be your egg? It seems to be an 'Evolution Egg'"

The dragon hung her head.

"That's right. They were stolen by the humans. That's why I'm searching for them."

"You're wrong there. This egg was in the possession of Evil Squid of the Four Heavenly Kings. Which means that the ones who stole it weren't the humans but the Demon Lord."

"Wh, what was that---! This can't be right... No, I should have thought about that possibility..."

She despondently bends her neck and curls herself up.

Somehow, she looks pitiable.

"In other words, you attacked the surrounding villages because your eggs were stolen? How many did you have?"

"Six. The attributes of those who warm them decide what will be born. If they are warmed by the likes of the Four Heavenly Kings, the most atrocious demons might be born... it just might be the end of the world."

"But they are not limited to that, right? --Lapisia, please come here for a moment."

Lapisia briskly comes to my side while holding the egg.

"Take a closer look. There are white lines on the previously pitch black egg. It's now influenced by Lapisia's attributes."

The dragon opened her eyes as she looked at the egg.

"Oh...! How extraordinary! Although it should normally take ten years-- Thank you, thank you so much for your help!"

"But there are still five more."

"Yes... I have to find the eggs before they hatch."

"Will that be soon?"

"They should be okay for three years. However, there isn't that much time to turn them back into white shelled dragon eggs. Still, I'm glad that at least one came back..."

When she said this, she stretched out her forefeet with their sharp claws, but Lapisia jumped back.

"No!"

"See, Lapisia. This egg, belongs to the dragon, doesn't it?"

"Doesn't matter, no!"

Lapisia runs away while holding the egg.

"Hey, come back!"

But the dragon strongly nodded.

"I guess I should leave this child's future to her..."

"Is that really okay?"

When I asked, the dragon again spoke telepathically.

"It is being purified by the Earth Goddess, *za*... I give it to her. *zazaza*... That child should have a good future then."

"Is that so... well, if the mother says so, it's fine. I'll also carefully watch over it."

"I'm thankful."

The dragon deeply bowed her head.

--And, this might also be one of those times when Lapisia instinctively chooses what's best for the world.

"Well then"

"Hm?"

"I actually came here to get your cooperation."

"What is it? I'm busy looking for the eggs..."

"I know, so let's make a deal. We'll get back all the eggs and in exchange you'll help Leo."

"Hmm... Leo, huh. It's been a while."

Leo approached and lowered his head.

"It's been a while, Dragon-sama. Thank you very much for the time when the epidemic was spreading."

"No, no. I only told you where to find the medicinal herbs."

"Thank you very much, Dragon-sama... and Keika-san, there's something I'd like to ask you..."

"Hm? What is it?"

"...no, it's nothing after all"

Leo hid his face.

-- Was I found out at the end?

Was it bad how I easily handled the dragon?

Well, he's certainly not someone who'd chat about it.

And others probably wouldn't believe it even if it was told to them.

"But, Keika. --What do you mean by helping Leo?"

"Well, it's easy. All you have to do is to bring us to the capital and say something like 'Leo snatched something very valuable away that was stolen from me. I'll deal with

him."

"...I don't really get it, but if it's just that I'll cooperate-- and if I do this, you'll help me to search for the eggs?"

"Of course. I-- and Leo's party as well I guess"

"Eh!?"

Leo looked at me in astonishment.

"You also earned quite a lot in this dungeon and got a good weapon, isn't that right? I don't think you'll be against it."

I smiled as I said this.

Leo soon regained his composure, showed his white teeth and smiled wryly.

"I can't win against you, huh, Keika-san..."

"Hehe, naturally-- then, Dragon, let's go"

"Leave it to me-- huh, you earned!? Just wait a moment!?"

"What happened?"

Suddenly, the dragon shouted "Floor View" and started to look into the empty space.

"It, It can't be! You went through the dungeon with the highest difficulty!?"

"Ah, so it really was the very hard mode, huh. We got some items and I don't intend to return them. A hero can claim anything he finds necessary to defeat the Demon Lord in the first place. And lost property that reaches the countries is also given to the heroes after half a year if no one claims it."

--Everything is made in favor of the heroes so they can quickly defeat the Demon Lord.

"Uwaaa... what have you done! My favorite dungeon that I brought up under my personal care is...!"

"Aren't you glad that you can now start from scratch?"

"Uaa... how cruel. The Crystal Boa, the Sand Whale, the Magic Golem. I worked myself to death to prepare them!"

Tears are floating in the big, green eyes of the dragon.

"They were rather tasty, you know? More importantly, let's hurry to the capital. If you don't want to, I can also knock down everything else you have prepared."

"Eh...! You're a devil! --It can't be helped, get on."

The dragon leans her back over to make it easy for us to get on.

I mount the dragon together with Leo.

I looked back at Celica and spoke.

"Celica! Wait here! We'll be right back!"

"Take care, Keika-sama!"

Along with Celica's concerned voice, the dragon spread her wings and flapped them.

The huge body rises.

The dragon turned her head and looked at us.

"Firmly hold onto me! --I'll take off!"

The dragon took off.

We fly out of the cave and up to the blue sky.

We went straight to the capital to the east.

The wind howls when it hits my face.

But it feels pleasant.

"We're quite slow, fly faster!"

"You don't have to tell me! Then, I'll show you my whole strength!"

The dragon accelerated, cutting through the air.

kiiin--!

An ear piercing flying sound was emitted.

White vapor trails were born from the tips of her wings as the dragon flew eastward.

CHAPTER 63

THE DRAGON AT THE CAPITAL

The dragon needed less than a few hours for the distance that took us a week by foot when we went to Green Mountain.

Soldiers shot at us with bows and magic when we approached the capital.

They hit the dragon's body.

I spoke to her as I stroked her neck.

"Don't hurt any humans, otherwise we won't be able to negotiate."

"I understand-- 'Wind Shield'"

The flow of the surrounding wind changed when she cast the spell.

The arrows and magic that came flying at us were abruptly deflected into various directions.

"This is quite the useful magic, huh. Maybe I should also memorize it"

"Do as you like."

"Okay, let's descend onto the balcony on the third floor. And put Leo into your mouth. It might be bothersome, but please pretend to be fainted, Leo."

"Understood, Keika-san"

Then we landed on the balcony on the castle's third floor.

I jump from the dragon's back and enter the castle while holding the "Proof of Hero".

I arrived before the throne room.

"The King! I want to meet him! This is urgent!"

One of the soldiers comes rushing.

"He, Hero-sama! Just what is this all about?"

"There was a misunderstanding and I came to resolve it. Where is the king"

"If it's me, I'm here"

The king came with his walking stick out from behind the door to the throne room.

My wooden clogs are making sharp sounds as I rush to his side.

"King-sama. I have to talk to you regarding Leo's subjugation and the dragon's extermination."

"It looks like that"

The king said this while he looked at the dragon that was on the balcony and Leo, who was in her mouth.

"It wasn't the Demon Lord who attacked and freed Leo, but the dragon who lives in the western mountains."

"Oh. But why?"

"It seems that Leo stole a treasure from the dragon's place and the dragon wanted to find out its whereabouts."

"What! Is that true?"

"Yes. By the way, the dragon came to inquire whether Leo acted on his own or whether the country was involved."

The king grabbed his beard and stroked it.

"Hmm. That would be another... difficult problem"

"She'll understand it if you talk to her. Please talk to the dragon in person. You can save this country simply by severing your connections with Leo."

The king nodded and spoke to the knight commander standing next to him.

"I'll try to talk to the dragon. Let the knights and soldiers lay down their weapons."

"Eh, but, if something happened to you..."

I speak from the side.

"Wasn't it already proven that neither arrows nor magic works? Don't you think that it makes no sense to further enrage the dragon with useless things?"

"Ah... Hero-dono, will this really be okay?"

"Believe in me. I came back alive because she really just wants to talk to the king."

"Understood"

The knights were scattering.

"Well then, shall I see if I can to talk to her?"

The king went out to the balcony.

He stood in front of the dragon with his walking stick.

"Oh Dragon of the western mountains, this is the first time we meet. I am Daphnes the third, the ruler of this country."

"Oh human king, haven't we decided that us and the humans won't interfere with each other since ancient times? This person broke that rule. Do you have a relationship with this person? I'll burn this country to ashes with the breath of god, should he have acted on your command. Oh king, choose your words wisely."

The king glanced at me.

I nodded.

The king answered in a dignified voice.

"There is no relationship whatsoever. This country does not know this person."

"Is that so. Then I will only let this person know the pains of hell. I'll also stop to punish the villages. I hope that we will continue to not interfere with each other."

"I'll keep that pact at heart. --However, it's the truth that a human has troubled you. We'll cooperate if there is anything you need help with."

"In that case, my eg--"

I interrupt her in a hurry.

"King-sama, please leave this for another time. I'll forward her request to you."

"Hm, I see"

"Why--"

Because the dragon tries to speak, I telepathically talk to her.

--Don't speak. There are people with connections to the Demon Lord here.

"*zaza* ... It can't be! *za* ... Understood"

The dragon looked at me and spoke.

"You're rude, Hero. I'm talking to the king right now."

"I'm terribly sorry, Dragon-sama. But their existence may bring chaos to the human countries."

"I see, this was careless of me. --Well then, I'll send the hero as a messenger."

"As you wish. And I am sorry that my subordinates attacked you."

"No, there's no problem since I wasn't hurt at all. But you should tell them to refrain from such foolish acts in the future."

"Understood... I'll pass it along"

"So, get on, Hero"

"Well then, King-sama. We'll meet again."

The king spoke while having a bitter smile.

"Would you tell me everything in detail in some night?"

"...Yes, sometime."

I nod.

--The king looks like he cheered up.

After the king returned to the castle, the dragon spread her wings and took off.

In the blink of an eye, the castle below us becomes small.

"This was dangerous. I should have told you more about the state of the country beforehand."

The dragon laughs through her nose.

"What kind of cheap drama play was that? 'Dragon-samaa~'"

"Shut up. I did that for you. You'll be attacked again if the Demon Lord doesn't think that you've given up on the eggs."

"You think fast as ever"

"Naturally. Now then, let's quickly return to the mountain"

"Yup. Hold onto me tightly. We'll be back soon."

"I'm ready"

And then the dragon flew to the west again.



We returned to the cave in the evening.

The dragon let us off and went somewhere.

Celica approached.

"How was it, Keika-sama?"

"Don't worry, it worked fine. The king himself has pledged, that the country has no relationship with Leo."

"Then I'm glad"

Celica breathed a sigh of relief with her hand at her chest.

Leo comes forth while he stretches his neck.

"That made me quite dizzy after all. However, thank you very much, Keika-san. Thanks to you, it ended without me having to die."

"Once this is over, you can come to my village in the north of the capital and show your face to your sister."

Leo bowed deeply as I said this.

"Thank you very much.... Then, what shall we do next?"

"First, let's split up and search for the eggs, because it seems that terrible monsters

will be born. You should have friends among the demons, right, Leo? Can't you use them to gather intelligence?"

"I guess so. I'll try to ask them."

"Well, I guess that the remaining two guys of the Four Heavenly Kings each have one."

"You might be right with that. So, this leaves three..."

"Then, should I collect the eggs from the Four Heavenly Kings first...?"

I thought with my hand on my chin.

Hmm, what to do from now on?

My name should spread, now that I got rid of the threat of the dragon to the west of the capital.

They'll probably now erect the bronze statues.

My name should also spread in the south with Doruas in the center.

It's about time that my residence in the village should be completed, so I'd like to develop the village.

I plan to make a holy ground for Hero Keika.

I can steadily make preparations.

-- I want to quickly gather a lot of believers and want to become a true god.

Well, for now I'll take down the rest of the Four Heavenly Kings and recover their eggs.

I can look for possibilities to further spread my name along the way.

The question is, where they are.

Then Lapisia and Tilt came near.

"Welcome back, Keika!"

"This is one of the eggs that we are looking for, right?"

Tilt pointed at Lapisia's round egg.

"Yes, that's right."

"I, might have seen one with a different color before."

"Eh, where?"

"The saint who let me change my Job had one on her back. It was more white though"

"I see. She might have snatched it away from the demons... this is bad."

""Bad?""

Celica, Leo and the others exclaimed in chorus.

"The saint is already targeted by the Demon Lord because she can change Jobs. If she now also has one of the eggs..."

"The Demon Lord's army will go after her in full force, right?"

Celica frowns to Leo's words.

"This is dangerous. We have to safeguard her as quickly as possible."

"Do you know where the saint is?"

"I guess so. She couldn't board a ship, so she should have walked to the country in the west."

"Hmm"

I thought with my hand still on my chin.

--The reason why she couldn't board a ship was because Evil Squid caught and sunk the ships.

He didn't do it only to frighten the people but also to minimize the saint's range of actions.

Really, the Demon Lord is quite cunning, doing two or three things with one strategy.

"Helping the saint has the highest priority. While I go there, Leo's party will search for the remaining eggs."

"Understood"

"Yes, leave it to us"

Leo and Tilt nodded.

"Ah-,that's right. Leo might get in trouble when he's judged as a sinner again-- I don't really know what to do about that though."

There might be no other choice but to alter his attributes.

But I don't know what to do if the Demon Lord creates even more of the new judgment devices.

At the moment I'm not able to change them on an essential level.

Then Celica spoke from the side.

"In that case... Might you be able to use this?"

She held a pendant in her hand.

"This is?"

"This was given to me from my mother when I was young and she said that I should never ever let go of it and wear it even while bathing. It might be that it can hide attributes to some extent. But it's not absolute."

Tilt looks dumbfounded.

"Eh? Celica-oneechan was a sinner!?"

"Yes, I was a sinner. Keika-sama saved me just when I was about to become a sacrifice."

"...But why? Leo and Nee-chan are extremely good people!"

Tilt was gritting his teeth just as if he was the concerned party.

"Ah. The sinner system was created by the Demon Lord to kill everyone with the 'Light'-attribute."

"What did you say!?" "That's what's going on!?"

Tilt and Leo were shocked.

"Well, this also means that saving sinners is a way to trouble the Demon Lord. Now then, let me take a look at the pendant..."

I looked at the pendant with "Truth Sight".

[Memento Pendant] Mother's memento. Hides attributes to some extent.

"You're right, it has the effect to not let them discover you as a sinner. But it became useless now. In fact, you were already found out at the village. After the Demon Lord released new devices, it can now be seen through."

"Is that so... I'm sorry for not being of any help"

Celica was depressed.

She wanted to do something since she has suffered as a sinner herself.

Leo smiled and shook his head. His blue hair sways smoothly.

"Isn't that your treasured keepsake? It's something that your mother gave to you, and you are alive precisely because of her love. I feel truly grateful for the offer, but I just can't accept such a precious item. I'll try my best on my own."

He can't accept things filled with parental love, huh. He's such a fine young man.

"Celica, lend it to me for a moment"

"Yes, Keika-sama"

I thoroughly looked at it. A drawn magic circle was mixed into the flower and plant patterns.

"This indeed deceives the old judgment devices... yes. If you're examined with the new devices... no, even if it would work on the new devices, it would just be a game of tag-
- Dark, can you please come here for a second?"

"What do you need?"

He pushed up his glasses with his finger while he approached.

"Can you strengthen this magic circle which hides the attributes? I think we have to at least double it..."

"I see. You're not thinking about preventing the judgment, but to shift it, huh. In that case, we'd better triple it and..."

We discussed for a while.

An idea came to mind and we came up with a theory.

Next we simultaneously burn magic circles into a stone about as big as the palm of a hand. As a finishing touch, I write "Keika" and make it into an amulet.

I pass it to Leo.

"Keep this close to your body. It should almost certainly prevent you from being judged as a sinner."

"Thank you very much, Keika-san, Dark"

"Don't worry about it"

Then, Minya came along with the dragon.

Next to them was Gelato, the rabbit chef.

"Keika-oniichan, I made dinner"

"Oh, perfect timing. But, why is the other cook there?"

"I made it together with Gelato"

Gelato's long rabbit ears were hanging as she bowed.

"Thank you for the recipe. I thought that I'd take the opportunity since I'm also handling the meals for the dragon."

"Is that so. You're not just living in the dungeon, huh."

"Of course. Well then, please eat before it gets cold."

Tilt jumps up and down.

"Yippee--, food--!"

We were guided to a table that was prepared for eight people. It was covered with a white table cloth and there were mountains of meat, fish and other meals on top of it.

"Okay, shall we eat?"

As soon as everyone started to eat, voices of admiration arose.

Tilt shouted when he ate some soft meat that was coated with bouillon.

"This meat, it's so soft! And it's seriously tasty when you dip it in sauce."

"And this soup also seems to seep through your whole body."

Celica smiles while she eats some soup that exudes the aroma of seafood.

The bread is freshly baked and soft. It resembles a croissant.

Minya's ears are lively moving.

"This bread is... it's like a sweet"

"It's made by folding the dough and butter over and over before it is baked"

Gelato was impressed.

"To be able to see through it with just one bite. As expected of the one who made that sauce"

Just listening to me while we are eating lets Minya's cooking level further rise. It's now at Lv 23.

This is good. She'll soon overtake her father.

Lapisia's eyes are sparkling beside me.

"Tasty!"

Dark whispered.

"It's like your magic recovers with every bite".

"I now understand how that old man got so fat."

Gelato speaks.

"There are also seconds. And we have prepared the hot spring after you have finished the meal. Please use that door over there to go out."

"Oh, a hot spring! I wonder how many years it has been."

"Seconds!"

"For me as well"

"I guess I should also take a little more"

The tiresome travel through the dungeon fell into oblivion as we ate.

I wanted to discuss our next actions while eating, but I also forgot about that.

CHAPTER 64

HOT SPRING WITHOUT MIXED BATHING

We entered the hot spring after we had finished the meal.

Of course, there's no mixed bathing.

The men went in first because the women will stay longer.

It is an outdoor bath above the clouds.

You can see the ground through the gaps between the clouds.

Above is a starry sky that I've never seen before.

The hot spring is larger than a swimming pool, probably for the dragon to get in. My feet won't reach the bottom at its deepest part.

It would be the greatest, if the three girls would be here with me instead of us four men.

However, it was exceptional enough, to enter a hot spring while looking at such a magnificent scenery.

Then a strange voice rang out and Tilt came running toward the bathtub. He has the slender body of a youth, but he is also well equipped with muscles.

"Yippee--!"

With a **zabaan**, a column of hot water rises.

Dark, who is hit by the splashing water, that is dulling his glasses, pushes Tilt's head underwater.

"*Gulp*, *Gurgle*! What are you doing, Dark!"

"Playing in the bathtub is a breach of etiquette."

"Shut up! The dragon said I could swim!"

"What you're doing is far from that"

I speak to them.

"I already thought so during the time in the dungeon, but you two are quite close, huh."

"Just where" "No way!"

Dark and Tilt shouted in a chorus.

Just from that alone you can infer, how good their relationship is.

Leo talks to me. I thought of him as a slender youth, but his chest is surprisingly sturdy. His body is toned like steel.

"Keika-san, you're going to the west after this, right?"

"Yeah, to find the saint and safeguard her."

"And we are looking for the eggs. Is there something particular that you want us to look for?"

"Can you find out the whereabouts of the Four Heavenly Kings from your demon friends? Then I'll go and defeat them."

Leo looked at Tilt.

Tilt hangs his head with a gloomy face.

"One is at the World Tree"

"So that's how it was. Then--"

Tilt shakes his head.

"You mustn't go there. Neither magic nor physical attacks work. Neither you nor the girl can defeat him."

"Heh. Was he strengthened with some kind of physical nullification?"

"Probably. Barrier Muuk is a monster that was created through the Demon Lord's research... he's an extremely sick guy who lets everyone who challenges him first attack three times. And after he easily receives the attacks, he tortures them to death."

"Then won't poison or gas be effective?"

"We elves aren't stupid. We tried every method. Poison, paralysis, sleeping pills, drugs, fire, earth, thunder, freezing. He even endured the hell fire of the Spirit King. No matter what we did, nothing worked. I doubt that even the Demon Lord or a hero could defeat him."

"Heh... there seems to be no way to win when fighting upfront, huh"

I have some things in my mind, but disregard them for now.

"We can still worry about that later on. So, let's look for the other eggs instead."

"Other than the ones that Lapisia, the saint and those two of the Four Heavenly Kings have, where could they be?"

"Greyhades might have had one. Although I heard from my friends among the demons that he died."

"Ah, he didn't have an egg when I killed him."

"Eh!? Keika-san, you even killed Greyhades...!"

"But I didn't know of the eggs at that time, so I didn't really look for it. Maybe it's still somewhere in the great forest at the northern border. Your friends might be able to tell you whether the Demon Lord's army recovered it or not."

Leo brushes his wet, blue hair upwards.

"Yes. And I'll try to find it if they haven't taken it back yet. Otherwise I'll look for the other eggs. Should I report to you if I find one?"

"Please do so. It might become troublesome if you got too much attention and your identity leaked out."

--Well, I also won't be able to sell my name and gather believers if Leo does too much. That's the main reason.

But there's no way I could say such a personal motive.

Of course, it's also true that he might get in trouble if his identity would get exposed.

Leo, who doesn't know of my inner thoughts sincerely lowers his head.

"Thank you.--Where should I report to if I find something?"

"Either to Kynmerick's inn at the capital or to the village to the north of the capital. You can also leave a message with the Naga of the high speed transportation if you're in the south."

Understood.

After that, we left the hot spring and switched with the female group.

I glimpsed at them with "Clairvoyance" as they leisurely stretched out their arms and legs, exposing their nude bodies under the starry sky.

Although all of them are slender, Celica has the most prominent curves in direct comparison. Especially around her chest.

Minya speaks while she lunges at Celica's breasts.

"What do I have to do... to make them this big?"

"Eh!?... I don't know"

Minya rubs her own, gently sloping chest.

"I want them to be big... because Keika-oniichan, likes big breasts"

--I want to think that this is not the case.

"You are cute enough just as you are"

"Hm..."

Celica stroked Minya's head. It seemed to feel pleasant as Minya purred.

Lapisia is swimming in the deeper part with flutter kicks.

She looks like she enjoys it.

There seemed to be no danger, so I stopped watching them and wanted to go to bed.

But the dragon spoke to me.

"Keika, can I ask you, how you broke through the dungeon?"

"Ah--, sure..."

I talked about everything from the first to the 15th floor.

The dragon sighs.

"So there was such a way. Even though I painstakingly prepared the ship."

"The idea was good. But it was bad that you put the floor with the snake first."

"I see.... I should have polished it more. Because it'll be difficult to get the same monsters, I have to come up with new ideas now."

"Is that so."

"Lower and middle-tier monsters can be bought with money or summoned with magic, but I have to catch high level monsters myself."

"That's quite arduous. Can you make a floor that provides instant death when

entered?"

"You'll lose your qualification as Dungeon Master if you make an impenetrable dungeon. You won't be able to use the convenient abilities entrusted by the gods."

Suddenly I remembered the Tower of Trials and asked about it, because it somehow gave off the same feeling.

"Is the Demon Lord also a Dungeon Master?"

"No. It's something that can only be bestowed by the gods. And the registration examination is quite strict."

"I see. Because I thought that the Tower of Trials was under the patronage of the Demon Lord."

"The Tower of Trials should have been registered as a property of the Vanus Faith."

"Is that so. The upper echelon really might be undermined-- it shouldn't have been impossible to conquer, if they had acted on behalf of a god."

"I guess so. It should only be wicked enough to not let the people act rashly, but we can't really make evil things on a Demon Lord's level. It's an art to us. We are also holding dungeon contests every ten years to compete with our skills."

"I see. So that dungeon was for the contest, huh. Well, I have some ideas. They involve puzzles and simultaneous battles. Also submerging and other stuff"

"Can you give me an example?"

"How about something like this?"

You have to press buttons in separate rooms at the same time but when the buttons are pressed, the doors close and strong monsters appear. Especially for a party of two, it'll be a really hard fight and certain death if one of them is left behind.

The dragon's eyes lit up when I gave several ideas.

"Oh, that's interesting! Let me do this-- I'll work all night!"

"That's fine with me, but please take us to the border tomorrow."

"I know. You don't have to worry, I can do without sleep for about a year."

The dragon went somewhere else.

She probably went to mess with the dungeon core. I don't know how the dungeons in this world are created though.

After that, I lied down and closed my eyes.

From tomorrow on I'll look for the saint.

I'll quickly safeguard her and then return to the village.

And then I should start to gather believers in earnest.

I'd like to build a foothold in the country to the west while I'm at it.

While I was thinking that, Celica and the others returned and slept next to me.



The next day, we mounted the dragon and flew to the western border.

She quickly returned back to the mountain. It seems that she is eager to make the dungeon.

We headed to the checkpoint that was along the way. Next to the large gate were two buildings.

One was the soldier's dormitory and the other was a place to pay taxes.

Soldiers, who checked whether there are goods to declare, were standing at the side of the road and calculated taxes and fees.

This road is the largest trade route and an important source of income to the countries, so they are looking into it quite diligently.

Also, the country's permission is required if you wanted to import a large amount of goods. Otherwise the goods will be confiscated.

--But, this is irrelevant to heroes.

I pass the gate while showing my "Proof of Hero". The other person is a young soldier with some remaining acne.

"I'm Keika, the hero of the Daphnes Kingdom. Let me pass through."

"Eh!? Hero-sama? Please wait a moment... uh, yes. It's genuine! The three women are your party members... do you have other luggage?"

"No, this is all."

"Is that so, then please go through-- welcome to the Fabrica Kingdom."

"Thank you. By the way, heroes don't have to pay any tolls up to one carriage, right?"

"Yes, that's correct. You can freely go in and out, and you can stay as long as you want.

"So that's how it was. Thank you."

--Demons or the Demon Lord might be able to escape, if you had to apply for crossing the border each time. The preferential treatment was made for that.

The preferential treatment seems trivial, but you could make a fortune just by fully loading a carriage with spices.

It's a preferential treatment that merchants would give their hands for.

I won't do it because it's troublesome.

I asked.

"Oh, right. Did you see a woman who wears a white habit and is known as the saint?"

She's amazingly beautiful."

"Eh... no... why do you ask?"

The soldier suddenly averted his gaze.

--He definitely knows something.

I took out the "Proof of Hero" again and put my arm around his shoulder.

I whisper to him.

"It doesn't have anything to do with me if you are accepting bribes and let people pass without permission. But the saint is targeted by the Demon Lord and needs protection as soon as possible. Should you know something and hide it, I'll have to dispose of you as an underling of the Demon Lord.... Do you get it? Then, speak."

"Ah, yes. Hero-sama. The woman you are looking for has passed through here five days ago."

That was about the time we started our dungeon exploration.

"Did she say where she went?"

"No, not particularly... ah, but she asked where she can buy equipment to cross the desert. I told her about the town that is three days to the northwest."

"Is that so. Thanks for the info"

"So, will I be punished?... Please help that woman if she's chased by bad people. I've been given money to not tell anyone..."

"No, my priority is only the protection of the saint. There's no problem."

"Thank you very much. It is a privilege to be of help to you."

The soldier had a pale face and was soaked in cold sweat.

I heard everything I wanted to know, so I tapped his shoulder and released him.

I look back and speak.

"We'll head to the town in the northwest. I'd like to catch up to her before she crosses the desert, so we'll hurry a little. Are you okay with that, Celica, Minya?"

"Yes, the town in the northwest is Fores, isn't it. Let's go"

"I'm okay."

Minya nods while she carries lots of food and materials. The special bag was about three times as large as usual.

It looked like I'd somehow abuse her, but when I asked her whether I should carry something as well, she declined, saying 'This is my job'.

She doesn't seem to have any problems because Beastfolks are stronger by nature, so I leave it as is.

Then we left the crowded checkpoint and headed northwest.

CHAPTER 65

THE BIG-BREASTED BEAUTIFUL ELF

It is night after we hastened for two days.

We finally reached Fores, a town that was facing a huge desert.

Until now, there was only some scattered grass and other plants, but a majestic desert is spreading beyond Fores.

I tilted my head.

"Just what is the saint doing? Where is she heading?"

"Isn't she just trying to escape from the Demon Lord's pursuers?"

"But, there is nothing to defend herself if she'd be attacked in the desert."

"That's also true... I wonder why..."

Celica tilted her pretty head. Her blond hair gently flows.

"For now, we need an inn. We can gather some information later on."

"Yes" "Understood" "Food--"

The town of Fores was forlorn. There were few people.

We entered the only inn in the town.

We arrived at the bar on the ground floor.

When I take a look, a man who seems to be the innkeeper is yelling, and in front of him are a woman and a girl apologizing in Dogeza.

The innkeeper, who has a bad look in his eyes, speaks while holding a hair ornament.

"Haa? I shall forgive you because you don't have money? You thought it would be enough because this place looked cheap! You thieves!"

"I'm terribly sorry. I didn't know that this inn was so expensive. Please somehow forgive me. I'll clean and work in the inn as repayment"

The woman rubbed her head on the floor. Her green hair was flowing and I could see her ears. They were long and pointed ears.

She was an elf.

She had even larger breasts than Celica and her face, that was beautiful like a sculpture, was distorted from distress.

The young girl who is in Dogeza next to her also has green hair and pointed ears.

"Sorry, sorry..."

She was muttering while trembling.

The shopkeeper throws the hair ornament at the woman and speaks.

"I have enough employees! There's no place for you to work! Are you saying that I should fire the people who are working here so you can work!?"

"N, no way..."

The elven woman raises her face and looks like she is about to cry.

I talk to the man sitting at the table next to me.

"What happened? She looks like an elf"

"Hehe, I'm looking forward to that woman who can't pay the lodging... huh, I haven't seen you before"

"Yeah, I just arrived at this town. I'm a traveler."

The man grinningly gazed at Celica's large chest and Minya's thin waist as he spoke.

"Is that so. You should be careful... hehehe"

-- What's wrong with those guys?

If you can't pay you have to sell your body?

When looking closely, there were only guys in this bar.

But it feels like they aren't just here for fun. They seem to have some ulterior motive.

I spoke to the innkeeper.

"It's kind of noisy here, what happened?"

"What do you want!?"

"I'm just a guest. If those two can't pay, I'll pay for them. So prepare lodging and meals"

The innkeeper frowns.

"...you're saying you know how much is costs?"

"Heh. You mean for staying at this inn for one night? It's not a high class inn by any means though"

"That's life, I'm the owner. I can decide the prices at my own discretion."

"That's true. Well then, I'll stay the night, so please arrange for that."

The innkeeper made a grim face, but his attitude quickly changed after he looked over at Celica, Minya and Lapisia.

The surrounding men are exchanging clumsy looks with the innkeeper.

The innkeeper smiles and rubs his hands together.

"Understood, dear customer. I was slightly irritated because of the dispute. I'll prepare the rooms immediately, so please have a meal first."

"Yes, understood. I'm sorry"

The innkeeper at once disappeared into the back of the bar.

"--Ah, that's right. I pay a round. Please accept it."

"Oh, aren't you generous" "Let's do it" "I'll take honey wine!"

The waiters hurriedly move around.

I speak just when everyone was served.

"There's something I want to ask. Has anyone seen a beautiful woman wearing a white habit?"

"Hm~?" "Don't know her" "There's no way I'd have overlooked her if she's beautiful"

--The guests really don't seem to know.

Might the saint have passed through this town?

"Is that so. Please tell me if you still remember something. Then, please drink."

The men cheer and bring the alcohol to their mouths.

Then, the hem of my clothes was pulled.

The elven girl was pulling with her thin arms that looked like dead branches.

"Saint-sama, seen her"

"Th, this! You mustn't say this!"

I shift my gaze between the elven parent and child who are at my feet.

"Ah. How long are you planning to sit on the floor? Please stand up and tell me about you, I'll treat you to a meal."

"U, Understood"

I let them both stand and we sat down at a large table in a corner of the room.

The elven woman takes a seat and lowered her head. Her breasts swung even more than her hair.

"Thank you for your help. I am the elf Fioria. This child is my daughter Rii."

"I'm Rii~ Thank you~"

She vigorously bowed her head. I feel that her mental age is very young.

Fioria speaks with an anxious face.

"But, is this okay? This seems to be very expensive. I might trouble you..."

"It's fine either way. Rather, why are an elven parent and child at such a place."

"Due to reasons, we were scattered here and there..."

"Is that so. That's harsh. --So, you seem to know the saint?"

Fioria frowns.

"Hmm,... I can't really say that"

"I see, it's natural that she forbade you to speak. Do you know where she went?"

"No, this is..."

Fioria is hesitating.

I thought about telling her that I'm a hero, but I wasn't yet at the point where I wanted to make it public.

"If you're an elf, do you know Tilt? A boy that's around 140 years old?"

"Eh, Tilt!? Yes, I know him. He's a very reckless child.... Did he inconvenience you?"

"Inconvenience? Hmm, I can't really say that he didn't, but whenever he did something really bad, he sincerely lowered his head on his own volition and apologized. He's a good child full of energy."

"Oh, that child on his own...? He's changed, huh"

Fioria gently smiled.

"He indeed might have changed. He got a high level Job called 'Magic Fighter' because he wants to defeat the guy of the Four Heavenly Kings at the World Tree."

"Eh...! It's impossible to defeat him... a high level Job!?"

"Yes, he met with the saint and had it changed."

"I see... it seems to be okay even if I tell it. The saint headed for the World Tree."

"The World Tree...? But isn't the invincible guy of the Four Heavenly Kings there?"

"Yes. Barrier Muuk is there. No one can win against him... but, the Saint-sama said that she has found a way to win."

"Heh... but it's worrying. Can you tell me where the World Tree is?"

It would be troublesome if she died and I wouldn't find out about her method and whether it worked or almost worked. It also wouldn't be good if the egg would be snatched away.

I have to quickly help her.

Fioria makes a difficult face.

"Why are ordinary people going so far?"

We're interrupted by the gazes of the surrounding men.

It was dangerous to talk about intricate things.

"I can't tell you here. Will you come to my room later?"

"Yes"

The meals were brought.

It's an ordinary meat dish with soup and hard bread.

It doesn't look expensive.

Fioria's and her child's faces became gloomy.

I asked.

"Don't hesitate to eat. By the way, what are you doing from now on? You don't seem to have enough money."

Fioria warped her beautiful face.

"...I'll run. I'm sorry."

"Is that so. If possible, please stay until tomorrow morning. Then I can do something for you."

"...Understood"

We quickly finished the meal.

Then we headed to the room.



The room is on the first floor.

The interior is plain and there are two crude beds.

We entered the room together with Fioria.

We sit down on a chair and a bed respectively.

Minya and Lapisia are lying on the neighboring bed.

I took the "Proof of Hero" out from my chest and spoke.

"Well then, Fioria. I'm a hero."

"Y, You were a hero?! I said so many rude things, I'm terribly sorry!"

"Don't worry about that. But keep silent about it for now. So, can you tell me, where the World Tree, that the saint headed to, is?"

"Yes! Or rather, I'll guide you!... Then, I also have a request"

"What is it?"

"Hero-sama. Please somehow save the World Tree for the sake of us elves."

Fioria lowered her head.

"What do you mean?... Come to think of it, Tilt has spoken about that. I heard, that the World Tree is withering because its sprouts are plucked, and if it dies, the elves are becoming extinct with it."

"That's right. Without the World Tree, we won't be able to get the special honeydew that we need to feed to our babies and we won't be able to raise our children."

"I see. So your request is to save the elves? How many time is left until it withers away?"

"It's already weakened to its limit. We elves even have already decided to launch an all-out attack. So only the women and children have fled."

--An all-out attack with the determination to die, huh. To think that they were already driven so far.

"Was that so... Hm~, I hesitate to give an immediate reply... it might be difficult"

Celica, who was next to me, was perplexed.

"Eh!? You can't help her!? But you're strong enough to do anything, Keika-sama"

"I don't want to make promises I can't keep. I need to rescue the World Tree if I want to save the elves. But there's no proof that I can defeat Barrier Muuk."

"Th, This is... if it's you, you can surely..."

Celica was flustered with her hand at her mouth.

Then Minya quietly spoke.

"Keika-oniichan said that he can't do it. So, he can't do it"

"Although he always found a way until now? "

Minya violently shakes her head. Her black hair is making a fidgety sound.

"Onii-chan is strong. He's the strongest. But he's no almighty god. For example, he can only use water and wind, but no fire or earth."

"You're closely looking at him. As expected of you, Minya"

"No matter, how unexpected it was, he always could do it after he said that he can do it. Even at the times with the squid and the dragon. That Onii-chan is now saying that he can't do it."

"That's right. I can't do it. Or maybe I should say, that I don't have enough information

to come up with a plan yet."

Celica gulps and looks up to me with her blue eyes. Her blond hair is drooping.

"I'm sorry, Keika-sama. Because we were always together, I presumed that you can do anything. You have to harden your heart and first gather intelligence for now. I'm really sorry"

"It's fine if you understand it. The priority for now is to safeguard the saint and to find out what she knows. I like the kind-hearted Celica, who worries about the situation that the elves are in though. Are you fine with that, Minya?"

"Yes"

Minya vigorously nodded.

Fioria sat sorrowful in the chair as she spoke.

"I'm terribly sorry to have made an unreasonable request..."

"I just don't have enough information. I'll defeat him if it seems that I can do it"

"Yes. Thank you very much... also, I have another request. It is about this child"

She speaks while she embraces Rii.

"Ah--? Mama?"

"Good girl"

Fioria caresses Rii.

I was already interested in Rii's status for some time. Her behavior seems to be that of an infant.

While I thought, that something was strange, I looked at her with "Truth Sight".

[Status]

Name: Riririri@i

Gender: Female*Male~Female

Age: 39#139

Race: El+++f

Job: #Spiri\$%t User

Class: SpirTit Ar\$t Master --8

Attributes: "Tre/e" = "&Light"

Hm? Is the status bugged?

"...just what on earth did you do to that girl?"

Fioria sorrowfully cast down her eyes.

"The truth is... this child is targeted as a so called sinner by the humans. She couldn't leave the village that way. We performed a ceremony and borrowed the power of the World Tree to try to tamper with her so that she could travel... But-- it failed"

"I see. That's why the contents are messed up. I guess it didn't work because the World Tree is dying?"

"Yes... but, we don't know of any way to cure her..."

"Hm? Couldn't the saint who can change Jobs fix her?"

"She was extremely in a hurry so we could only exchange two or three words and I was unable to ask her"

--Well, I guess it's impossible in the first place for ordinary people who can't see the status.

"I see. So you ask me because I'm a hero"

"Don't you know of any way to help her?"

Fioria caresses Rii's head.

Rii hugs Fioria with an innocent smile.

"Mama--. Like--"

But the "Light"-attribute, huh.

Hm? Does this mean that the elves haven't incorporated the sinner system?

In other words, there is a possibility that there are still many elves who have the "Light"-attribute around!

I grinned while I spoke.

"I guess I can help you... , but normally I should get some kind of compensation, shouldn't I? Even a hero doesn't work for free."

"...Ugh... I'm,... prepared"

"Oh. Can you show me what you have?"

Fioria stood up and took her crude linen clothes off.

Her gigantic breasts are exposed. They really are bigger than Celica's. She tried to conceal them with her slender arms, but that was only increasing their appeal.

Her body can easily gain weight and her limbs give off the appeal of easy childbirth.

When she came to my side, she took my hand and placed it on her breast. My fingertips are digging into her soft body. It feels like a ripe fruit.

"Please,... do as you like with me."

"Heh. Now, what should I do?"

"Ke, Keika-sama!? --*kya*"

Because Celica stretched out her hand to stop me, I took her hand and embraced her. I let her soft limbs sit on my knees.

"I already have an important woman. So that won't work."

"*Ah*... Keika-sama..."

Celica blushed within my arms.

Tears are floating in Fioria's jade colored eyes.

"Please, Hero-sama. Somehow, please somehow help this child...!"

"What do you think, Celica?"

"I can't think of her as a bad person. Especially that child... would you please help her?"

"All right. In exchange, you should worship me, and not less than the World Tree. Can you do that?"

"I'll do anything if you can help my daughter!"

"You're a strong mother, huh-- your wish, I'll grant it. Then, let Rii take off her clothes and lay her down on the bed."

"Understood"

Fioria forgot to put on her clothes, so she let her breasts bounce while she stripped her daughter.

Then she made her lay on the bed that I was sitting on.

I stroked her hairless skin while I let my hands glow.

Rii's small limbs are twisting.

"Hyahya, Mama, tickles"

"Be patient, please... close your eyes"

"Yeees, Mama--"

Rii, who was held down with both hands on her head, obediently closed her eyes.

Because I'll only get rid of the notation bugs, I just need to stroke her whole body.

It worried me, that her ribs weren't that solid, maybe because of insufficient nutrition.

"Her name is Rii. Her age is 139 and she is a Spirit User and Spirit Art User. Is that correct?"

"Yes, that's right"

Rii's young body glowed.

[Status]

Name: Rii

Gender: Female

Age: 139

Race: Elf

Job: Spirit User

Class: Spirit Art User Lv8

Attributes: "Tree" "="

"Yup. It's a success."

The naked Rii opens her beautiful, jade colored eyes.

She lets out a shriek, hides her chest with her hand and pulls her thin legs to hide her body.

"Ah... Ehm... Mother!?"

"Oh, Rii!"

Fioria embraced Rii. The girl's face is buried within the huge breasts.

Then she cries.

Rii was puzzled while she shows her face from the breasts.

Celica was unable to just watch and made them dress.

Fioria cries and lowers her head.

"Thank you very much. Really, thank you very much, Hero-sama!"

"You won't forget to worship me, right?"

"Of course, Hero-sama! --Hey, Rii, you should thank him as well"

"Thank you very much, Hero-sama"

"I think that her memory might still be hazy for a while, but it should recover soon."

"Yes" "Yup, you helped me. Thank you"

"...Now then, let's continue the discussion from before."

"What is it, I'll do whatever I can!"

"That's a good attitude. Is it possible to make the elves worship me if I save the World Tree? Because I want to gather as many believers as possible to become a Valor God."

"This is... yes, World Tree-sama will be number one, but if you save that precious World Tree, it should be easy to promote yourself."

--I suddenly became motivated.

It's watering the mouth of a god, because although the number of elves is small, the probability that there are many with the "Light"-attribute is high.

"Oh, I just heard something good. Then, please let the elves worship me if I save the World Tree."

"I'll ask the chieftain.... But, will that really be okay with you?"

"It's the greatest wish for me, who wants to become a Valor God."

"Understood. I'll definitely persuade the chieftain. For now, I'll guide you to the World Tree where the saint is."

"The saint's information might be the key. So I'll rely on you. Well then, see you tomorrow."

"Yes"

They left the room.

Celica sits down next to me.

"Thank you very much, Keika-sama"

"It's for my sake, there's no problem"

"But, --there's one things I'm curious about."

"What is it?"

"Why haven't you revealed your identity as a hero and disciplined the innkeeper?"

I smiled and spoke.

"Don't get it wrong, Celica. The authority of a hero isn't omnipotent. The owner has the right to decide the prices of the lodging. Fioria, who did not check the price beforehand is in the wrong, so I can't help it."

"Th, this is..."

"You can't complain, if you're deprived of the hero qualification if you freely exert the power of it, right? The favorable treatment is only for things that are related to the Demon Lord. Also, I'm the hero of the Daphnes Kingdom and we're currently in the Fabrica Kingdom."

"But, I heard that you can take everything they own from the people."

"No. You can't use it if it has no connection to the Demon Lord's extermination. Do you get this?"

"Ah... understood. I'll believe in you"

"So, shall we sleep?"

I pushed Celica down, put my hand inside her shirt and rub her chest.

I touch her big breasts directly to overwrite the previous sensation from Fioria.

Otherwise my heart won't calm down.

Celica twists around as I let my fingers move.

"Ah... hm, Keika-sama~, please forgive me... they are, watching"

Celica's cheeks are dyed red while she is enticingly breathing.

Minya and Lapisia were looking from the next bed.

Lapisia shouts.

"Lapisia too, rub"

She jumped over and began to rub my chest.

"Ouch, this hurts! Don't rub me with your absurd strength! You'll gouge me!"

"I'll also..."

Minya comes between Celica and me. She opens her Miko clothes.

"Argh--, this is troublesome!"

I hugged all three of them in one go to make them immobile.

As I laid while hugging them, I fell asleep.

CHAPTER 66

DRIVE BACK THE INNKEEPER!

THE SAINT'S SECRET

We got up early in the morning and ate breakfast after holding a short meeting.

Then a problem arose just when we wanted to pay the bill.

The innkeeper yells.

"This little isn't enough! It's the rate for six people, you'll have to pay 6 holy gold coins!"

"Th, This is! That's too expensive! It's out of the common sense range!"

Celica was tightly grasping the bag with the gold coins while she spoke.

I also give my words.

"We're in the middle of our journey, so be content with this."

"Haa? Shall I let this remark pass? This is a business! If you can't pay, how about paying with your bodies!"

"In other words, you intend to disturb my journey?"

"If you can't pay, you won't continue your journey! --Hey, guys, make them understand it a little!"

"Hehe" "Haha" "These breasts are the best!" "Don't hit her face... that'll reduce the fun!"

I spoke while I looked around the dirty men.

"Hm, there are 15. Celica, Minya, you'll take five each."

"Yes!" "Understood"

Then Lapisia, who was holding the egg, lightly pulls on my clothes.

"I?"

"You can't hold back, right?"

"Holdback! Can!"

She made a small fist and her golden eyes shone bright. The hammer on her back really is just a decoration I guess.

"Well, then you'll fight together with me"

"Yeeees!"

While I still feel uneasy as to whether it really is okay, we were targeted by the men.

The men surrounded us while having vulgar smiles.

"It can't be helped because you can't pay, right?" "Well pay for you instead, so be grateful"

A short-tempered guy loosens his belt and approaches.

"--Do it"

Following my signal, Celica and Minya moved while frowning from anger.

Golden and black gales are dancing.

shu!, *dogonn!*

Sharp and dull sounds are resounding.

The inside of the bar is flooded with screams.

"Kyaaa!" "Higiii!" "My balls, my baaaalls!" "It's torn ooooff"

...Both of them swung their sheathed swords, kicked from time to time and smashed the men's nether regions.

One man faints in agony. Another man leaks white foam from his mouth. And another man wets his bloodstained pants.

Well, generally that was my order.

But the sight let my own nether region shrink just from looking at it.

I was facing off against four men with my sheathed Tachi.

Well, they can't keep up with my speed.

"Kya!" "HigyaaA!" "Iiiiiii!" "H,Help---ah!"

I thoroughly crushed their crotches.

--Although it might be overkill, they probably have repeated this countless times until know because this is the only inn in this town.

I intend to let it end here.

Lapisia was clutching her fist and swung it sideways.

"Hehe, what do you plan to do, little girl... I won't let you get away!"

When Lapisia then went before the man in an instant, she obviously swung her arm with full power. The floor cracks after she steps onto it.

"Cuuuuuure, Puuunch!"

dogoonn"

She swung her arm with full strength. It's the blow of a god.

The lower part of the man's body twists and is sent flying while the upper part is folded before it flies to the side.

"NooooooooOOO!"

He's in death agony while he hits the first wall and then becomes a lump of meat after he crashed into the stone wall of the second-hand shop on the other side of the street.

--No no, just where was she holding back there?

Then, while I was thinking that.

The man was wrapped in a pure light and returned back into a human shape.

Did she cast Cure at the same time when she attacked?

The man was spasming and only the white of his eyes could be seen.

"A... a..."

He lost his words because he just had a near-death experience.

"Lapisia, that's not holding back. I'd call that half killing..."

"Is that soooo?"

Lapisia cutely tilted her head. Her blue twin tails were gently swaying.

Well, it should still be okay since the outcome was that she didn't kill him.

I turn to the innkeeper while sighing.

"Do you get it? That you shouldn't disturb my journey."

"Do, Don't think that it will end with this! There are scary people supporting me!"

"Liar! If that's the case then try to tell me their names? You're just prating to talk your way out, right?"

"It's the boss of the underworld, Gould-sama! Hehe, are you scared now? Be ready to be made into slaves!"

I spoke.

"In other words, you pretended to be an inn and looked for customers who looked like they'd sell and made them into slaves, huh"

"What's wrong with that! This town isn't on the trade route anymore after the forest turned into a desert! I won't have anything to eat if I don't do it!"

"I see, I see. Because it was disconnected from the trade route, you raised the prices as much as you liked. And then you turned those who couldn't pay into slaves. You also planned to do that with us. I see, I see."

The innkeeper started to get cold feet.

"Ju, just who are you?"

I suggestively smiled while I reached for my chest.

"Ah? Didn't I tell you? --I'm someone like this."

I took out the "Proof of Hero" and held it before the innkeeper's face.

"A, ah! Herooo! --No, this is, this is!"

"I told you, right? That you shouldn't disturb my journey. Those who are disturbing my journey are underlings of the Demon Lord. I'll dispose of you"

"Ju, Just wait a sec!"

"No, I can't answer that wish."

Then guards came over.

They look at the disastrous scene with the men, that were rolling around on the floor, and point their swords at me.

"Th, this is! --Bastard, what did you do!?"

"Be careful of what you say. I'm a hero"

I hold the "Proof of Hero" before them.

The soldiers' expression changes.

"He, Hero-sama!? We're terribly sorry for this! --But, just what in hell..."

"This man demanded six holy gold coins as payment for staying one night with six people. When we refused, he instigated the men to attack and tried to make us into slaves. Behind him seems to be someone called Gould, the boss of a criminal organization. Take him away and throw him into jail."

"Six holy gold coins!? Also with Gould!?... I already thought, that the innkeeper behaved strangely, but that he was doing such evil!"

"Wr, Wrong! I did it for this town...!"

"I should let you tell everything at the station"

"N, Nooo...!"

The innkeeper rampaged but was immediately seized by the soldiers and taken away. The men were also captured and taken away.

I speak to the captain.

"If I visit next time and find something strange in this town, I'll dispose of everyone as underlings of the Demon Lord. Do you get this?"

"Yes, understood, Hero-sama! We'll keep a watchful eye on it from now on."

"Please do so. And thoroughly investigate and uncover the background"

"Yes!"

The captain saluted and went away.

Then, only we were left.

"Well then, shall we go?"

"Yes, Keika-sama"

Fioria approaches and lowers her head.

"Thank you, Hero-sama. They targeted us to make us into slaves, right?"

"That was dangerous. Or rather, normally the accommodation fee will be charged in advance as precaution against people who try to sneak away at night. You should be suspicious if they ask for postponed payment. Well then, please guide us."

"Yes, please leave it to me."

Thus we made arrangements for crossing the desert and chased after the saint.



The sunlight is strongly shining down upon us.

The fine sand continues endlessly in the desert.

It's been three days since we had mounted large lizards-- Sand Lizards, and were heading northwest.

I can't remember how many sand dunes we had passed.

By the way, we have one lizard exclusively for luggage.

Because Minya didn't sell the high class materials, saying "The purchasing prices are low", the luggage didn't decrease.

We nimbly rode while leaving footprints in the sand.

We're pursuing the saint now straight for five days since we crossed the border.

I looked ahead many times over with "Clairvoyance", but I just couldn't see the saint.

It was strange, no matter how I looked at it.

Fioria spoke when the sun had just passed the zenith.

"The World Tree is about one hour away."

"So at the end, we didn't catch up to the saint, although we hurried that much. We'll turn back if she died... I'll check a last time--'Clairvoyance'"

My gaze penetrated the sand dunes in front of me and I looked far into the distance.

There was a huge stump about ten kilometers ahead. The diameter alone was about two kilometers.

It looks like it would break through the clouds if the tree grew normally.

Then, I found a woman who was walking around the stump.

The woman wore a white veil and a habit.

She carries an egg on her back.

However, I remembered her face.

For a while, I was thinking "I've seen her before somewhere", before I realized it.

It was the saint that apparently undid the curse on the first village. I've seen her on the portrait that was hanging on the wall.

She was more beautiful than in the picture though. And she had a mysterious atmosphere around her.

She was aimlessly walking around.

--Then

A question floated to my mind. There's no luggage. She doesn't even have a water bottle.

Did she cross the desert on foot? What about equipment and food?

I mean, she shouldn't have been there when I was checking in the morning.

I thought, that it was strange and looked at her status with "Truth Sight".

[Status]

Name: Lilille

Gender: Female

Age: Se • cret (♥)

Race: God

Job: Ocean God

Class: God Art User, Summoner

Attributes: "Natural Water" "Ocean" "Holy Waves"

[Parameters]

Physical strength: 8.88 million (+1 million + 1 million + 7.6 million)

Agility: 8.85 million (+1 million + 1 million + 7.6 million)

Magical strength: 8.9 million (+1 million + 1 million + 7.6 million)

Wisdom:: 8.87 million (+1 million + 1 million + 7.6 million)

Believers: about 761.050 ("Light" virgins 50 + other virgins 1.000 + other

760.000)

Vitality: 88.66 million

Mental strength: 89.35 million

Attack strength: 8.88 million

Defense strength: 17.7 million

Magical offense strength: 26.7 million

Magical defense strength: 17.94 million

[Equipment]

Weapons: None

Protective gear: "White angel's raiment (habit)" Defense ×2 Magic Defense ×2

[Invalidates all abnormal effects]

Accessories: "Tidal Wave Ring" Magical strength ×3

Possessions: Evolution Egg

I spontaneously laughed.

"Haha! Of course, she appeared at the most unexpected places and changed the people's Jobs! Or rather, shouldn't I be surprised that she's alive?"

"Ke, Keika-sama!? Just what the hell are you doing?"

"Celica, let's hurry! The saint is at the World Tree!"

"Ye, yes!"

We sped up by kicking the sides of the lizards.

I telepathically speak to her.

--Hey, old lady with the Secret (♥) age.

"Eh! --Who's there, some insolent fellow!?"

Lilille turned her head. Our eyes met over the distance of ten kilometers.

"...A god? Keika Hiko-no-Mikoto? I've never heard of you"

--Ah, there's no way you could have heard of me. Sorry to have spoken rudely. I'm a god from a different world. I'm currently acting as a hero. I have the approval of Lupersia.

"You've helped Lupersia-neesan, haven't you"

--That's right. I purified her and she's now asleep.

"Could it be that the one beside you is my niece Lapisia?"

"Auntie!"

"Ah! It's 'Lilille-neesan', please properly memorize it..."

--You were also listening, Lapisia?

At that time, there were movements in the distance.

Demons appeared from above the World Tree's stump.

--There are demons, be careful.

"I know"

Lilille waved her hands.

Just by that, the group of demons vanished.

I speak.

--We don't have time. You seem to have a way to deal with Barrier Muuk, can you tell me your plan?

"I don't know whether it'll kill him or not.... But... if I should fail I'll leave the rest to you."

--What do you intend to do?

"I'll let him drown"

--I see. He's immune to physical and magic attacks. So you act under the assumption that he has to breathe.

"That's right. I'll escape if it doesn't work. I didn't come here to die. If I'd die, the oceans would die as well.... I can't even really fight. I can only let the ocean rampage and devastate coastal cities."

--I see. Understood. I also thought something up. If you fail, we'll try to fight him.

"Thank you very much, god of a different world. Is there anything else you what to ask?"

--That's right. Why are you fighting the guy of the Four Heavenly Kings yourself? The damage just would be too great if you'd die, so why won't you leave it to someone else?

"The World Tree won't last any longer. It desperately puts forth sprouts, but they are continuously plucked. It's been long forgotten, but the World Tree is also one of the main gods. If the World Tree dies, all trees will die with it."

--Eh! Then, won't that mean the extinction of all living beings...?

"That's why there's no choice but to go myself because I'm the strongest of those that can move at the moment."

--If the people are dying, I also won't be able to become a Valor God. There's no choice but to do it.

"Is there anything else you want to know? Other than my age"

--Don't you have a little to few believers?

"Although the oceans are full of monsters, I'm thankful that there are still people who are worshipping me."

--I see. Surprisingly you are collecting quite a lot of virgins.

"Hehe. I simply spread the rumor that you can meet a splendid husband if you worship me."

--You don't say. You seem to also gather the "Light"-attribute.

"I protect them at my monasteries as soon as I find them"

--Come to think of it, I took Fal in. Do you mind that?

"I thought that that child would be okay, so I didn't accommodate a hidden retreat for her. You defeated Evil Squid and rescued her, didn't you. Thank you very much. Please make her happy somehow."

--Next is... , ah, that's right. You tried to give some people high level Jobs, didn't you?

"Yes. But there was never something that I couldn't do even better."

--If you're that strong, why don't you defeat the Demon Lord yourself?

"I would have defeated him a long time ago if I could defeat him. But as I am now, neither I nor even you can win."

--Is he that strong? What became of the other gods beside you?"

"They either got cursed or were sealed"

--So that's what is was. There wasn't anyone when I spoke to them. You also didn't respond though."

"My location might become known if I speak with the humans..."

--That's certainly possible.

Telepathic communication within the same species is encrypted. But you have to use magic or devices to communicate between different species and then it seems like normal communication.

"I cut all calls from the temples... the days were painful when I couldn't even confer oracles."

--I guess it can't be helped... Ah!

"He came, huh... I'll concentrate on the fight a little. Any interference is unnecessary."

While she walks toward the huge stump, a man whose body is complete golden appears. He wears black pants and a black cloak.

His aura is unusual.

So this is Barrier Muuk of the Four Heavenly Kings?

Barrier Muuk was loudly laughing.

"You did well to come that far, you fool! I am one of the Four Heavenly Kings, Barrier Muuk! I praise your skill to defeat my underlings. --Well then, I'll let you attack three times. Then despair because your attacks won't get through."

He crossed his arms and turned his back to her while he madly laughed.

Lilille threw a sharp gaze at him and stuck out her slender hands.

CHAPTER 67

BARRIER MUUK OF THE FOUR HEAVENLY KINGS

We advanced through the desert.

I looked at the widely spreading battle in the far distance using "Clairvoyance" and "Attentive Ears".

Barrier Muuk and the Ocean Goddess Lilille are squaring off against each other at the World Tree's stump with its diameter of several kilometers.

Barrier Muuk, whose body is shining golden, is laughing.

"Come at me, I'll let you attack three times. I'll teach you that you can't do anything to me. Fuhahaha"

I look at him with "Truth Sight".

[Status]

Name: Barrier Muuk

Race: Demon Ogre

Job: Demon Lord Army Special Forces Captain

Attribute: "Grudging Darkness"

Attack Strength: 9999

Defense Strength: 800

Vitality: 1900

Mental Strength: 500

Auto Recovery: 300

[Skills]

Strike:

Kick:

Sonic Wave: Emits a shock wave when swinging the arms. Range Attack.

[Data]

All attacks are invalidated.

[Equipment]

Cloth cloak

Cloth pants

Holy beat gold skin: Plated with holy beat gold.

Hmm? He doesn't seem that strong.

Even Celica or Minya could defeat him if their attacks would get through.

He isn't even a commander.

That beat gold. Has he coated himself in it. That's quite the bad taste.

"I don't mind. Well then, first..."

Lilille kicked the ground and her white habit is spinning around.

Sand is whirled up as she lunges at Barrier Muuk.

"Ha!"

High-spiritedly, she punches him with her water-covered fist.

dogooon!

The air and the ground are shaking violently.

An attack of a goddess, who has an attack strength of 8.88 million.

However, Barrier Muuk is standing firmly.

"Mh? Did you do something? It neither hurts nor itches though. Fuhaha!"

"Ku, just as rumored, isn't it?"

Lilille takes a step back.

I wondered why she attacked when she already knew that it wouldn't work.

But I soon realized, that she did it to show it to me. The information might prove useful.

But how can that be?

Even though physical attacks are ineffective, he should at least be blown away.

Is the generated energy completely absorbed?

No, such a counter-effect shouldn't exist.

Lilille waved her arms. Just by doing that, a giant wave appeared behind her with a "zaa".

Heh. She summoned a part of the ocean while probably making sure to not influence the ocean itself.

"Waves of the ocean, gather in my hands..."

The giant wave behind Lilille's hands forms a blue belt and blue light is gathering.

"...Aqua Laser'!"

Extremely compressed water becomes a straight line and is released from her hands.

It would even slice the scales of a dragon like paper!

bashii!

A violent shock hit Barrier Muuk.

However, it only bounces with a *bashabasha* in front of his golden colored body.

He calmly stands with his arms crossed.

"Mh? This is your best afford!? This isn't serious at all."

Barrier Muuk is laughing loud with a "ahaha".

Lilille flicks her tongue with a "Tsk"

Her beautiful face distorts into a fierce grimace.

"As expected, it's still ineffective... then, one more time..."

Lilille waves her thin arms. Again, a giant wave appears behind her.

"Don't you have any other skills? It seems you can't entertain me any further!"

Lilille disregarded him and brings her hands in front of her chest.

"Oh great ocean, fill the space --'Aqua Pool'"

An about 100 meter high column of blue water rises with Barrier Muuk in its center.

It's several hundred meters wide and the millions of tons of water are sparkling.

Lilille is also enclosed by the water column and her white veil and habit are swaying.

It's a plain magic that simply gathers water.

However, Barrier Muuk grasps his throat and white bubbles are leaking from his mouth.

"*Gulp*... *Gurgle*"

Barrier Muuk tries to swim, but the water column moves with him.

--Oh. Did that kill him?

"I wonder about that... I'm not sure"

Barrier Muuk stopped moving after he let out some more white bubbles.

One minute passed, two minutes passed.

Five minutes later.

"Might this, have killed him?"

--Then.

Barrier Muuk raises his head. He has a suggestive, large smile on his face.

Then he swung his golden arms.

zudoonn!

The water column was blown away and the water scattered around the desert.

"Fuhaha! Any attacks and magic are powerless before me! I thought you knew that!"

"Wh, What!? Even the 'Aqua Pool'!"

--It, It can't be!

Is even magic invalidated that doesn't target him specifically?!

This made the method I came up with impossible.

I thought about creating a vacuum and letting him suffocate.

I just have no idea how the invalidation works.

I telepathically spoke to her.

--Let's retreat for now! Lilille!

Barrier Muuk approached Lilille with a grin on his face.

"Those were your three tries, right? --Then, it's my turn!"

Barrier Muuk jumped from the World Tree's stump.

He's fast enough to leave a golden trail behind.

He extends his fist at a lunging speed.

"Ah!"

Lilille immediately tried to avoid it but didn't make it in time!

dogooo!

Barrier Muuk's golden arm pierced through Lilille's stomach.

"*Guha!*"

All her breath leaves Lilille's mouth as she is blown away.

Shouldn't she have had a defense value of about 17 million!?

His attacks shouldn't go through!

I looked at Lilille with "Truth Sight" at once.

Name: Lilille

Vitality: 79.76 million / 88.65 million

Mental strength: 79.76 million / 89.35 million

Attack strength: 8.88 million

Defense strength: 17.7 million

Magical offense strength: 26.7 million

Magical defense strength: 17.94 million

It decreased by 10%!?

Damage 8.89 million...!?

Is Barrier Muuk's attack strength added to Lilille's attack strength!?

Eh? Does he ignore defense values? I don't get it!

I think I've never heard of such an attack.

Lilille lies in the desert.

"*kaha!*... that hit hard"

She bleeds while she is raising her upper body.

Barrier Muuk stretched his arm out.

"I'll show you how to attack! --Heh!"

He swings his golden arms at a high speed.

A whirlwind is welling up. It's a fierce wind.

It's comprised of strong magical power!

--Avoid it, Lilille!

Lilille is standing up while she is staggering and is blown to the side.

zaann!

"*Aa*...!"

Blades of wind are cutting her from her chest to her left arm. Red splashes are scattering.

Name: Lilille

Vitality: 53.06 million / 88.65 million

Mental strength: 89.33 million / 89.35 million

Attack strength: 8.88 million

Defense strength: 17.7 million

Magical offense strength: 26.7 million
Magical defense strength: 17.94 million

It decreased by 30%. --No, exactly by 26.7 million!

He ignores the magical defense strength and deals damage equal to her magical offense strength!

Is it some kind of magic reflection!?

But in that case, the conditions are strange.

I looked at Barrier Muuk's status but it hasn't changed.

Just what does this mean!

--Run away somehow, Lilille!

"I... can't afford to die--"

Lilille chants while she tries to stand up and blood is flowing from the corner of her mouth.

--'Flow Wave'"

With a *zazaza*, a cloud of sand is rising and moves Lilille at a high speed.

She is faster than the wind. That's what I'd call god speed.

Barrier Muuk starts to walk with big steps.

"Where do you think you're going? Don't think you can get away from me! Hahaha"

Then he broke into a run and chased after Lilille.

Astonishingly, he can keep up with her godly speed.

A cloud of sand is magnificently rolled up.

--This is bad, he catches up to you! Come here!

"I don't want to cause any trouble to you--"

"It'll be even more troubling if you die! My dream will be over!"

"I guess you're right... I'm sorry. I'll come to you"

Lilille changed her course and headed into our direction.

I ordered everyone to stop.

We're in front of the last sand dune. Once we cross it we can see the World Tree's stump.

"Everyone, stop! Prepare for battle! Fioria, take Rii and run away!"

"Yes!" "All right" "Understood"

"Lapisia, you'll heal the saint"

"Understood!"

We climbed the sand dune and a white habit appeared on top of a cloud of sand.

The saint smiles exhaustedly.

"I'm sorry to trouble you--*Aa!*"

zaann!

A blade of wind cuts into Lilille's back.

Red blood is scattering while she tumbles down the sand dune's slanting.

Her HP are at 26.36 million. She'll die with the next magic attack.

I run up the sand dune.

"Lapisia! I'll heal her and you'll fight! Celica and Minya will act as your support!"

""""Yes""""

Lapisia can't heal her fast enough.

Although she restores 420000 HP, this isn't enough for this god.

I embraced Lilille. Her white habit is stained with blood.

I chant while I sprinkle some water from my gourd.

"--'Recovery'"

The wounds are rapidly closing and she starts to recover.

Just, it'll take some time. She has too many HP!

The girls are standing like they are protecting me while I'm holding Lilille.

--Then.

A golden radiance appeared above the dunes.

Barrier Muuk looks down at us while he is basked in the sunlight.

"Kuhaha! So she had companions here. I'll be your opponent once I've killed that woman!"

"I won't let you!"

Celica unsheathed her rapier. A blue coldness is rising from the blade.

Next to her, Lapisia is clutching her fists and blocks the route.

"Oh. Does this mean, you want to die first?... Well, I don't mind. I'll teach you that it's futile, no matter what kind of attack you use. Now then, I'll let you attack three times. Then you should know despair! Kuhaha!"

--He again lets himself attacked three times, huh?

Just why does he go through such lengths?

I catch my breath.

I get that there is a possibility that the three attacks might be some kind of trigger.

However, I have too little information.

I didn't have the time to thoroughly investigate.

Lilille has only recovered half of her HP.

I can't move yet--!

Celica and Minya definitely can't win.

There was no other choice left but to rely on a miracle by the Mother Earth God.

"Go, Lapisia! Buy us some time!"

"Understood, Keika!"

Lapisia is clutching her fists, swings her white dress and runs up the sand dune.

Barrier Muuk crosses his arms on top of the sand dune while looking down on her.

"You're just a small brat, but you seem to be strong. I'll look forward to whatever

attacks you have!"

However!

Lapisia suddenly turns around after she had almost reached Barrier Muuk.

Tears are floating in her golden eyes while she comes back.

"Wh, what's wrong, Lapisia!?"

"Curse! Scary! Hate!!"

"Eh!? Curse!?"

Where is there a curse...?

The cloak and pants are just made of cloth. And that's just normal beat gold.

A curse? A curse--.

I spontaneously yelled out.

"--Ahh! So that's how it is!!!"

I over-enthusiastically put strength in my arms, and Lilille, who is held by me, lets out a "*Fugyaa*".

Lapisia rushed down and went behind me. She firmly grabs my clothes while she trembles.

I smiled to Lapisia in that state.

"Great, Lapisia. This is your achievement. I didn't notice it because it wasn't written in

the status. There were also no signs of it. Or rather, the curse is probably hidden by the beat gold."

"I, great? Scary, good?"

"You're the best. You're probably the only one who would notice it with your trauma in curses"

Lilille mutters in my arms.

"Wh, What on earth...?"

"First, he lets you attack three times. That in itself is a trap. He has a curse that curses attacks and returns them, so to speak, he's like an evil spirit. That would adequately explain the unbelievable damage."

Normally, defense ignoring magic reflection is impossible. The magic is the same.

But if it's returned by a curse that works outside the system, it's possible.

And he wasn't chasing after her with that godly speed, but it was an effect of the curse that kept him within a certain distance.

I handed Lilille over to Lapisia.

"Lapisia, I'll let you heal Lilil... the saint"

"Understood! Cuuuuure--Cuuuuure"

A strong light is released from Lapisia's palms many times over.

I held my gourd and stood up.

Barrier Muuk is about to escape.

"What do you plan to do? Don't come!"

I rush up to the top of the sand dune. I can see the World Tree's stump on the other side.

Without any hesitation, I splash water from my gourd at Barrier Muuk, who tries to flee.

"Your secret was exposed! --Pure streamlet flowing through valleys Wash evils away and cleanse--'Purification Pure Water'"

Barrier Muuk is screaming while his skin is burning. The golden color is peeling off and brown meat can be seen, that goes up in black smoke.

"GyaAAA!"

Barrier Muuk is writhing while more and more darkness is gushing out from him and his body is decaying.

At the end, there was only the flesh on his bones left and he became like a zombie.

I look at him with "Truth Sight".

[Status]

Name: Barrier Muuk

Race: Demon Ogre

Job: Demon Lord Army Special Forces Captain

Attributes: "Darkness"

Attack strength: 1111

Defense strength: 800

Vitality: 1000

Mental strength: 500

Oh, the "Grudging Darkness"-attribute disappeared, now it's just "Darkness".

I got it right.

For the time being, he seems to have changed back into a simple monster.

I unsheathe my Tachi and sprinkle water from my gourd onto it.

"--Abiding by the name Keika Hiko-no-Mikoto, o small streamlet flowing since the age of gods, gather to form a raging torrent"

Barrier Muuk still came attacking with his tattered body.

"How dare you... The strongest power that I got from Demon Lord-sama... I won't forgive youuu!"

I swing my blue glowing Tachi.

"Perish, evil spirit! --'Water Demon Slashing Destroyer'!"

zuaaan--!

"*GyaAAAA*!"

Barrier Muuk was split right in half from his head and turned to dust, which was blown away by the wind, as he crumbled down.

I swing my Tachi and sheath it.

"That really was some troublesome guy."

Celica climbed up from below the sand dune.

"Thank you for your hard work, Keika-sama."

"It was easy once I knew the cause. One should have first either cleansed or blessed him without attacking to undo the curse. But if he instigates you to attack him three

times, the normal reflex is to attack. It was a blind spot."

Lilille's wounds were healed and she spoke to me.

"Thank you very much, Keika-san. You literally saved the world."

"You're exaggerating... although, isn't that actually right?"

The oceans were about to die and the people probably with them.

It almost became impossible for me to become a god in this world.

Lilille nodded while she smiles more beautiful than in the painting.

"I'll be in your care from now on"

"By the way, where's the egg?"

"Ah... I threw it away while I escaped. I have to go pick it up."

"That was a good judgement. Shall we go then?"

--Then

Somewhat in the distance, cheers came from next to the Word Tree's stump.

When I looked with "Claivoyance", a group of people with long ears and green hair was making merry.

There were 200 people. All of them were elves.

When I looked closer, Fioria and Rii were with them.

"Look! The hero Keika-sama has defeated the loathsome Barrier Muuk of the Four Heavenly Kings!"

"That's the power of a hero!" "To think he defeated Barrier Muuk!" "What strength!" "Amazing!" "He's the god who protected the World Tree"

Cheers are resounding in the blue sky.

I see, since I defeated him on top of the sand dune, it should have been visible from the other side.

And Barrier Muuk certainly stood out.

Minya brings the Sand Lizards and the luggage.

"Just as expected, you're strong, Keika-oniichan. I love you."

"It's thanks to everyone. I was helped by being able to observe the saint's battle and by Lapisia's instinct."

"I, great?"

"Yes, you've done great, Lapisia"

She squints her eyes and lets out a "Ehehe" when I pat her blue hair.

After that, we headed toward the World Tree's stump to join the elves.

CHAPTER 68

LAPISIA'S FEELINGS

After we had defeated Barrier Muuk, we formed groups with Lilille and the elves and eliminated the rest of the demons that were stationed at the stump.

We finished after several hours.

--But, we couldn't find Barrier Muuk's egg.

Although Lilille and I looked all over the place with "Truth Sight", we weren't able to find it. At the end, we concluded that he didn't have one.

Evening.

Tables were set up next to the root of the stump and a small banquet was held.

Even so I call it a stump, it was still creating a wall with a height of ten meters.

The elven women and children who evacuated were also participating, so it became a banquet of about 500 people.

The elves are coming to me in turns while I eat.

They sincerely give blessings to me.

"You were amazing" "Thank you for avenging my brother" "As expected of a hero"
"Now we have hope for our children, thank you very much"

Everyone shed tears of joy when they said their words of gratitude to me.

The elves are a long living race in this world, but it seems that each one of them has suffered for a long time.

Of course I didn't defeat Barrier Muuk alone and it would have been impossible without Lilille and Lapisia.

However, the elves only saw the moment, when I directly killed him, and thus I gained tremendous trust.

The story quickly made the round and they decided to carve a life-sized wooden statue to worship me.

--Because of the race characteristics, there were many "Light"-attribute virgins among them. There were ten.

The corners of my lips spontaneously rise.

I'm speaking with Jagd, the chieftain of the elves. He's a handsome middle-aged man with a refined smile.

"Hero-sama, thank you very much for your help this time. We just can't thank you enough."

"No, it was only natural to help. Also, I didn't do it alone."

"Just as expected of a hero. You properly judge your own strength. I heard the details from Fioria. She said that you wish to become a Valor God, so we want to support you with all our might."

"Is that so. Thank you. Then you'll erect a bronze statue?"

"No, we will carve it out of a dead branch of the World Tree, which is even harder than iron. We decided to pass it down along with the story, how you defeated Barrier Muuk."

"I'm in your debt."

"No, no. It's been a while since there was a hero who didn't demand money. We really admire this trait of yours."

--Which reminds me, there seem to be quite a lot of people, who become heroes by bribery.

"I'm not really concerned about money."

Jagd looked troubled when he spoke.

"Although it pains me to make another request to you, after you already did so much, but..."

"What is it?"

"The World Tree is extremely weakened. We'd be really grateful, if you could bestow it with your blessings, Hero-sama."

"I see. Understood, I'll head there together with the saint after the banquet."

"Thank you very much."

He lowered his head very deeply.

And then, the banquet lasted until late at night.



Late at night.

The desert is illuminated by the moonlight.

I, Lilille and Lapisia are walking around the World Tree.

Our destination is a sprout, that is growing from the World Tree.

It's quite arduous, because we have to bypass its roots, that are just like walls.

Lilille carries her egg on her back and Lapisia carries hers in her hands.

We arrive after we have walked for about one hour.

A young sprout is growing from the stump.

"Is it this?"

"Looks like it."

Lilille answered.

Although it has just grown, it was thicker than a human arm.

"Lilille, shall I bestow it with the power of wind while you bestow it with the power of water?"

"Yes, please."

"And Lapisia, you'll bestow it with the power of earth. Stretch out your hand and give magic power to it. Get a little away, because the sprout will move violently if you're too close."

"Understood!"

She holds the egg in her left hand while she points her right hand at the young leaf.

I and Lilille also point our hands at it.

The young sprout is gently wrapped in green, blue and brown light.

Then the light vanishes as if it is sucked in.

I patted Lapisia's head and spoke.

"Well, this should be sufficient. Too much will be toxic."

"Yes, this is plenty. Thank you very much, Keika-san."

"It was nothing. Lapisia also gave her best to adjust her magical power."

"Cured! Much"

Lapisia happily swings her twin tails. She lightly rubs her sleepy eyes.

Lilille spoke.

"Now then, Keika-san. I have various things that I want to talk to you about."

"Me too. But it's getting late. I'd like to let Lapisia sleep before that."

"You're right. I still want to talk to Lapisia first though."

"Hnn? Talk? Auntie"

Because she was suddenly spoken to, Lapisia answered while she was yawning.

Lilille speaks while she takes the egg from her back.

"Lapisia, you did well to notice the true essence of the egg. You prevented a calamity. You really did great."

"Calamity?"

"What do you mean by true essence? I only heard, that atrocious monsters are born from them when they are raised by demons."

Lilille speaks while she strokes the egg.

"Actually, the eggs don't only have creatures inside of them."

"Huh?"

"They also contain more general calamities like 'Starvation', 'Disorder', 'War', 'Panic' and so on.

"Couldn't that plunge the world into a chaos?"

"Yes, that's why it is necessary to turn them back to white."

"I see. That's probably the reason why Lapisia didn't want to give the black egg back to the dragon."

"Lapisia, Great!"

Lapisia bent her back while she was holding the egg.

Then, Lilille held her egg towards Lapisia.

"Now then, Lapisia. Let's exchange the eggs. I'm done with the purification of this one."

"No! I raised! Will raise!"

Lapisia held the egg like she was protecting it.

"You became attached to it, huh.... But, you won't be able to raise it after it is born."

"R, Raise! I mother!"

She brushes Lilille's hand away and doesn't want to hand the egg over.

--I see. She warmed the egg to protect the world as a Mother Earth God.

But because she was lonely, being separated from her mother, she became attached to it at some point and tried to fill the hole by becoming a mother to it herself.

"Hmm, this is probably partly my fault as well. I didn't really know what to do. I'm sorry."

"It couldn't be helped, since you didn't know about the rules of this world... Well then, Lapisia. This egg is the same as yours. Please endure it, because you can't completely purify it."

Lapisia holds the egg and starts to cry.

"This child, different! Not same! Always with me! So I raise!"

"Do you know, how to bring up a child?"

"Know! Pat, Warm, Kind!"

Lilille puts her egg in the sand and gently embraces Lapisia.

Lapisia was struggling within her arms, but Lilille strongly and gently hugged her close.

Lapisia's movements gradually weaken.

"Lapisia. Just like you have a mother, these children have a mother as well."

"Ah... but"

"Do you want to see your mother?"

"Want!"

"Then, what about these children?"

Lapisia's very young face was distorting when Lilille asked her.

"*Uu... uuu!! * *Uwaaan!* --Definitely, want meet mother! *Uwaaan!*"

"Then, what shall we do?"

"Children, back to mother! *Uwaaan!*"

Lilille gently caressed Lapisia's head while she was crying.

"That's right. You did well. But letting it go is also one of the parts of 'Raising'."

"Mother! *Uwaaan!*"

Lapisia was hugged by Lilille.

At that moment, a dazzling light shone.

The "Proof of Hero" is flashing.

"Member (Lapisia) has risen a level"

"Acquired a new skill"

[Status]

Name: Lapisia

Gender: Female

Age: 257

Race: Half-God

Job: Earth Mother God Lv 4 (Know the sky)

Class: Healer, God Art User

Attributes: "Good Harvest" "Radiant Soil" "Sacred Ground"

Assignment: Hero Keika Party

[Parameters]

Muscle strength: 90K (20K) (+0) max ∞

Agility: 50K (10K) (+0) max ∞

Magic strength: 160K (20K) (+0) max ∞

Wisdom: 70K (10K) (+0) max ∞

Luck: 999 (0) (+0) max ∞

Believers: 0

Vitality: 700K

Mental strength: 1.15 million

Attack strength: 90K

Defense strength: 100K

Magical strength: 160K

Magical Defense: 70K

[Equipment]

Weapons: None

Protective Gear: [Silver Dress] A dress filled with motherly love Defense x 1.5

[Nullify All Abnormal States] [Recovery with Elapsed Time]

Accessories: Ring

[Earth Mother God Skills]

Earth Energy Collection: Gathers the energy of the earth in yourself or another god. Attack strength x Lv value.

Earth crust turn: Reforms the earth by pulling the surface and putting it back.

Terraforming: Can transform naturally occurring elements like soil, sand, rocks and minerals into other known naturally occurring elements.

--I see. The raised children will one day leave the nest. A farewell always comes.

Just being gentle and teaching them isn't enough.

I couldn't understand this because I've never raised a child.

Lilille gently hugs the crying Lapisia.

I drew closer and stroked Lapisia's head. She now cries slightly less.

"I'm sorry, Lilille. I'm quite useless."

"Have you always been single, Keika?"

"That's right"

"You also still seem to need to grow as a god, huh. Please give your best."

"Yeah... I'll do my best."

I made a sullen face because I felt that myself.

Lilille is happily giggling. Her white veil is lightly swinging.

"So, she has now learned Terraforming, huh?"

"That's right. It looks like she can transform all matter within the limits of natural elements. This seems to be another large-scale technique-- How about transforming this desert? It should have been a forest in the past."

"That might sound good.... What do you think about that, Lapisia?."

Lapisia raised her head while she was still sniffing.

"*Sniff*, Hmmm?... *Sniff*"

"We were thinking about whether you might want to try to change the desert into fertile soil."

Lapisia looked around the surroundings while she spoke.

"No?... Yes?"

She wracked her brain while her sniffing increased.

She seems to be troubled.

"What's wrong? Is it difficult?"

"Hmm~... Raising"

She pointed far into the desert while she spoke. Wild Sand Lizards, Sand Beetles and sturdy plants, that were nourishing the land, could be seen.

Sand Dolphins were jumping in the distance. The whirled up arcs of sand are illuminated by the moonlight.

"Ah, I see. Because a new ecosystem has been born, the beings, that are living in the sand, might die if it's greened."

"Yup. Soil, sand, both earth"

Tears fell and wet the sand when Lapisia nodded.

"Well done, Lapisia. You're properly thinking about it as an Earth Mother God.-- By the way, why did it turn into a desert? Was it because the World Tree was cut?"

Lilille shakes her head.

"No, it's different. The World Tree was growing in the fertile soil which was overgrown with vegetation, but after it was cut, it sucked in all the nutrients and liquids from the earth to oppose the demons while continuously putting forth sprouts."

"I see... that's harsh. The demons might have been the original cause, but in the end it was a decision of the World Tree God. Well, there won't be any problems anymore, since we have bestowed it with power."

"That's right. Also, I think that the desertification shouldn't progress any further now."

"Buuu... t~"

Lapisia is earnestly troubled.

If this would have simply turned into a plain desert, she wouldn't worry about it and probably wouldn't even think about making it into soil.

It's puzzling because the Demon Lord is to blame for this.

"Then how about only turning the sand below and around the World Tree into soil. We can leave it to the World Tree, how much desert should be left."

"Good! I do, Keika!"

She put down the egg and wiped her tears. Then she placed her hands on the ground.

Her hands glowed yellow and a growling sound could be heard.

The earth shook with a *gogogo*, like it was signaling an earthquake.

"H, Hey. Don't turn the crust by mistake!"

"I know-- *yee--hah*!"

The earth vibrated similar to a landslide with a *zuzuzu* and the nearby sand started to shine.

The light spread like a wave above the surrounding sand and turned it into firm ground.

Lapisia, who was crouching, collapsed. Her blue twin tails are spreading on the ground.

"Hey. Are you okay?"

When I held and raised her, she was peacefully asleep. Her eyelashes are long.

Lilille looks at her sleeping face from the side.

"She has probably exhausted her mental strength. I think that she has to further practice the usage of her God Art."

"Practice, huh... Speaking of which, I can't teach her about her God Art at all."

"Why is that?"

"Because I'm a God Monk. And I don't know the magic of the gods over here. I think that it's similar, but I know very little about earth magic from the start."

"Is that so"

"Lilille, could you please teach her, even if it's just the basics?"

"...I guess I'll have to give my best for my cute niece. I'm also weak with earth though."

"You'd help me a lot."

Then I climbed the World Tree while carrying Lapisia and sat down on its top, gazing at the desert and the night sky.

Lilille brings the eggs and the luggage over and sits down next to me.

So just the two of us could talk.

CHAPTER 69

THE TRUTH BEHIND THE MYTH AND THE DEMON LORD

Late at night under the starry sky.

I sat next to Lilille on top of the World Tree's wide stump, and the desert was spreading before us, no matter where we looked.

Lapisia is sleeping in my arms.

Lilille stretches out her hand and strokes Lapisia's head.

"She has a cute sleeping face, hasn't she? She's just like I used to be".

"Eh~"

I squinted while I looked at Lilille.

When I did this, Lilille tapped me on my shoulder.

"Why are you looking at me like that? My sister and I are twins, so isn't it just natural, that I'd resemble my niece! You've met Lupersia-neesan, haven't you? Aren't we looking alike?"

She straightforwardly gets close to my face.

Her face is shining like it would emit glittering particles. She looks just like you would draw a beautiful goddess in a picture. Well, she actually is a goddess.

I wonder, if this is her usual character.

"No, Lupersia was consumed by the curse and I could only vaguely make out her silhouette."

"Was she in such a terrible state?... Thank you very much for saving my sister."

"I also wasn't really able to speak to Lupersia. Even though she told me, that she'd entrust Lapisia to me, I didn't know how to raise her."

"You've accomplished quite a lot so far, given the situation. I think that this is really amazing. --You probably have lots of questions, right? I'll tell you everything you want to know."

Lilille neatly smiles.

I wrinkle up my brows.

"There are just too many things I'd like to ask... Let's start with something simple. How should I proceed with Lapisia's next level up. Next is 'Know the sky'."

"Hmm. My sister should have set this for Lapisia. It might mean, to teach her about the connection between the sky and the earth, don't you think? Something like that the earth won't be watered without the sky."

"That's quite vague, huh. Well, next question. There's no problem with me aiming to become a Valor God, although I am a god of a different world, right?"

"Yes, since you follow the rules of this world, there are no problems. Or rather, please do so."

--Perfect. Now I have the permission of two of the main gods. I can now do as I please!

"Where did you get your hands on the egg you have?"

"I got it in the east of the Daphnes Kingdom. It was lost and I picked it up. Greyhades had probably dropped it, because he then chased after me in a panic."

"He was a muscle brain, so he probably didn't understand the importance of the egg. I guess, that's why the commander of the eastern army was in the forest at the northern border."

"Probably, you're right"

I move on to the main subject.

"Next, what kind of guy is the Demon Lord? Where is he? You said that I'm far from defeating him and that even you can't win, so how can he actually be defeated? Can you tell me everything along those lines?"

At that moment, a dark shadow appears on Lilille's beautiful face.

"The answer to this will take some time, are you okay with that?"

"Ah, I don't mind. And please be as detailed as possible, so I won't overlook anything unexpected like today."

Lilille looked up at the starry sky and sighed. Her white veil swings swiftly.

"Understood. Let me first reveal the identity of the Demon Lord. The Demon Lord isn't just the ruler of the demons. He's also known as the Hero God Vanus."

"Eh!? --Isn't he the Demon Exterminating God who has gathered the most believers!?"

"That's right. It began after our mother gave birth to us and created the world."

"Your mother is the Creation God?"

"Yes. She's also called the Creator God. Under our praise, she worked very hard, created the world and increased the living beings. But because she worked too hard, at some point, there was nothing left for her to do. Mother now had a lot of time to spare, and one day, she brought a handsome man along. As her lover. That man was Vanus."

"Was he a human?"

"We don't know where Vanus was born. But we thought that he was a splendid gentleman who was very beautiful, gentle and considerate. Mother was also completely head over heels with him and granted him divinity. No one objected at that time yet."

"Did he approach her while hiding his true character?"

"At that time, a lot of problems arose in the world. The living beings increased too much and they started to kill each other. At times, large-scale wars with many deaths occurred, and the world, that mother had created under great pains, was about to fall to ruin. At this time, Vanus made a proposal."

"Oh."

"How about creating one common enemy of all living beings, so they have to work together to oppose him?"

I nod.

"I see. That's the Demon Lord I guess."

Lilille nods.

"Exactly. We were half in doubt, thinking that this would be the same as to throw in the towel. What should we do? If we would let two countries, that were just about to start a war, be attacked by a horde of demons, would they really take each others hands without causing any suffering and reach the point that they'd cooperate?"

"Well, that's only natural. Once the wheels of war have begun to spin, it's not easy to

turn back."

"So, Vanus changed his appearance and took reign as the Demon Lord, made the demons into his puppets and caused a sense of menace. The people were working together, their number increased and they acquired peace in the face of the looming threat."

"It's going well so far, isn't it?"

"Vanus, who got the credit for the achievement, became an agent of the gods. He became the Demon Exterminating God Vanus, established the hero system, and spread the creed to save the people from the despair that was caused by the threat of the demons."

I spoke while I stroked my jaw.

"So it's a complete self-made performance. He stirs up trouble and gets the credit for the solution.... However, isn't he still just a simple god by only doing that? He's no threat."

"That's right. We were also optimistic so far. --But, before Vanus climbed the steps to become the Demon Lord, he received a 'certain authority' from mother."

"...I have a bad premonition."

"That was the 'Anti-Believer Setting'."

"Anti-Believer?"

"Just like we are getting power from our worshipers, he additionally gets power from people who are hating, begrudging or fearing the Demon Lord."

"--Eh! Then, the people, who fear the Demon Lord and are worshiping Vanus are added to his power twice!?"

"Exactly. However, we were relieved that the management of the world went smoothly and thus were off guard. When we became aware, the whole world was already frightened by the Demon Lord and Vanus's power was far greater than ours and even greater than the Sun God's. Due to that twofold addition.

"Then, did he reveal his true nature?"

However, Lilille shook her head. Her white veil is feebly swinging.

"The next thing he did, was to cause an internal strife."

"Oh"

"The Sun God was originally a very strong god, and because of that, he behaved arrogantly. He was only thinking about himself and therefore was an unpleasant god who wasn't thought well of by the other gods. He was like that since the beginning of the world, spouting things like 'I'm great, so give all other continents to me, you can just split one among yourselves, this should be adequate'. I think you get the gist of it."

--*Ugh*. Something hurts within my heart.

"That's what Vanus aimed at. The Sun God became isolated after nothing but bad rumors about him made the round. What we didn't know at that time was, that Vanus was manipulating him by whispering things like 'You're the greatest, you should have way more believers' into his ears."

"And then?"

"At some point, the Sun God said to us, that we should even hand over the continent on which our believers were living. Of course, we refused. It turned from a violent argument into a brawl. The enraged Sun God instigated his believers to attack our continent to snatch it away from us by sheer force while we fought. No matter whether it was the fight between us fellow gods or the land war, the Sun God was far superior."

"He was amazingly strong, huh?"

"Thus, Vanus made a proposal for a way to defeat the Sun God. His way was to use a massive force of demons to diminish the believers of the Sun Faith. We acknowledged. However, he brought in too many demons and completely devastated the Sun God's continents. The Sun God, who had lost all of his believers and power, was sealed. We were shocked, that the Sun Faith was completely annihilated, but since it was a decision made by everyone, we believed the Sun God to be at fault and Vanus wasn't blamed for it."

"That's how he got rid of his strongest opposition, huh. It's so sly that it makes even me angry"

"After that, the gods were slowly eliminated or cut off one by one. The number of gods gradually decreased. Then, his evil clutches even reached Lupersia-neesan."

"Because of Lapisia, right?"

"Yes. When mother was told, that Lupersia went out with a human and had a child with him, he incited mother to kill the child. My sister refused, but we couldn't go against mother. Sister struggled alone, became isolated and turned into a cursed god. Many gods were petrified. Vanus said, that there would be no other way than to

borrow the power of her child to suppress the curse, and she was sealed inside the coffin that Lapisia was sleeping in. But the curse wasn't lifted at all, rather it suddenly became stronger. Definitely Vanus didn't want the curse to be lifted from the start."

"I seriously thought that I'd die when she attacked me."

"You can be glad to be alive... as expected of you, Keika-san. No matter how optimistic we have been, we noticed that something was strange. But it was too late."

"The sinner system was already established and the human society was controlled from behind the scenes. Am I right?"

"Exactly. We told mother everything, but she shut herself in from the shock that Vanus has betrayed her. She forsook the world.... After that, the only path left to us was to fight. We joined forces with the remaining gods and challenged Vanus to a fight."

"And then, you lost"

"Yes. Moreover, he used Lapisia's coffin to petrify the gods one by one through my cursed sister's petrification power. And finally he even got me. The world will die for sure if I am killed. Then, Vanus will have obtained the whole world."

"...I see. So everything went according to Vanus' scheme, huh. Why were you able to break the petrification?"

"Maybe because she went easy on me since we look the same or because the effect was weak since we are twins. Probably because of a combination of both."

"That's certainly a possibility. But there are still questions. Why couldn't Vanus catch you after you undid the petrification? Also, why was the coffin, that lets you petrify gods, installed inside the Tower of Trials?"

"The coffin was most likely not moved on behalf of Vanus, but by one of his subordinates of the Four Heavenly Kings. Actually, keeping it at such a place created a blind spot. I've searched for it for a long time."

"I see. You won't be able to come across it unless you aim to become a hero."

"Also, the reason why Vanus couldn't make any more moves is because I launched a surprise attack on him after I broke the petrification. I inflicted a fatal wound, but he just laughed while he spit out threads and secluded himself inside an impenetrable cocoon. It's called an 'Evolution Cocoon'."

"When was that?"

"About ten years ago."

"Oh. With this, the Demon Lord became unable to act, huh. Then, who is in control right now?"

"Evil Squid and the Undead Art User Gerdolf of the Four Heavenly Kings should have been the ones in control, so it's probably just Gerdolf now. It looks like the demons are just maintaining the system, that was built up by the Demon Lord, to their best effort."

"It has caused various cracks, huh. Even though you were unable to kill the Demon Lord, it was sufficient for you to wander about."

"Yes. I searched my sister, looked for a way to defeat the Demon Lord..."

"You had it hard, huh. So, did you find a way to defeat the Demon Lord?"

When I asked Lilille, she somehow looked like she was about to cry. Her face was like that of a child, whose mischiefs were found out.

"Th, The truth is... I found one."

"Please tell me"

"This, can you promise me to listen to me without getting angry?"

"Hm? Why should I get angry? I'll think about it after I listened to you. Is it that serious?"

"Yes. Vanus is a god and the Demon Lord at the same time. Which means that he has to be attacked simultaneously with the god slaying 'Heaven Calling Holy Sword' and the Demon Lord slaying special skill."

"I see. So that's what you mean. The special skill is probably the hero skill 'Ultima Slash', isn't it? --Where is the sword?"

When I asked her, Lilille bit her lips while letting out a "*uu... *". Her well-formed face looked so distressed, as if she was about to cry."

"Please tell me. We can't prepare counter-measures otherwise, right?"

"Ugh... I'm really sorry-- The Heaven Calling Holy Sword is... inside of the Evolution Cocoon..."

My movements stopped. The wind that crosses the desert strokes over my black hair.

"...--Eh? --It can't be... you used it in your surprise attack!?"

"Yes.... I didn't know that you have to use a special skill simultaneously and only pierced him with the sword. That's why, it is now together with him inside the cocoon..."

My thoughts stopped.

I perplexedly gaze at the peerless beauty sitting beside me.

A heartfelt embarrassment could be seen on her face while she moaned with a "*uu--*".

I reflexively stretched out a hand and pinched her cheek. Her white porcelain-like cheek is warping.

Just one hand wasn't enough, so I also grabbed her other cheek.

I pull her beautiful face, that can't possible be of this world, into a square shape.

"It, it hurts..."

I somehow reject her plea and play around with her soft cheeks.

Then, I exclaimed from the bottom of my heart.

"Yo... yo, you, just what have you done! --Are you stupid? Are you an idiot? *AAAAAA!!*"

"*Hyaa!*" I'm sorry! I didn't know *hyuu~*!"

"You gave the sole weapon that can defeat the last boss to the last boss when you didn't defeat him, it's a complete checkmate!!!! With this, we can just call it 'Game Over'! This is at the level of 'Press reset and start from scratch!' Even the Creation God has

abandoned the world and secluded herself! Isn't it completely irrelevant what we do now!!!!????"

The yell that comes from my heart echoes even far into the desert

"*uuu... u!* I'm shorryyyy! Everyone in the world, I'm shorryyy!"

Lilille's apology and regret are resounding in the night sky in vain.

After I had played with the cheeks of this goddess for a long time, I released my hands and dropped my shoulders.

"In other words, no matter how hard I try, and even if I'd master the 'Ultima Slash', I definitely won't be able to defeat the Demon Lord, huh... *aa~*, I want to return to the heavens~."

Just why have I tried so hard?

I've been completely ignorant since I came to this world, huh?

"I, I didn't think that I made that much of a blunder..."

"Aah, I'm done. You're on the same level as a clumsy girl.... I take it back when I said that your 760.000 believers are too few. For you, even three would be a lot. You clumsy goddess."

"Th, that's terrible..."

Lilille, who had grasped her cheeks, had tears in her eyes.

I don't care.

I already had the feeling, that she might be a clumsy girl, when she headed to fight Barrier Muuk alone with the only plan of 'I let him drown' and then was about to die.

--*Sigh*. The Evolution Cocoon can't be opened due to its absolute defense. And at the

time, when he comes out of it, the sword will be in the possession of the Demon Lord.

There already isn't anything I can do anymore...

I hung my head.

Then, I caught sight of the peacefully sleeping Lapisia.

She has an innocent sleeping face. I'm healed just by looking at her cuteness.

"...But, Lapisia is working hard without giving up. As a Mother Earth God. Although she wants to see her mother, she's desperately enduring."

So, I also shouldn't give up.

"We have no choice but to put up a struggle.... Isn't there still anything?"

In a certain game, the hero's sword was destroyed and turned into a lump of orichalcum, but it became the original sword again after he reforged it.

It should be possible somehow.

--I see! Maybe we can just make another sword?

Lilille speaks.

"I also despaired when I realized, that I had failed. But I was thinking, that there might still be a chance, no matter how small, and wandered about, creating high level Jobs and protecting the "Light"-attribute. Somehow, we have to do something..."

"That sword, of what material is it? Is it something special?"

"Yes. It seems that certain rare gems are compressed before the material is extracted, then the powder of a Holy Dragon Fang has to be added for the forging to succeed. But all mines of these gems are under the control of the Demon Lord and they also don't appear on the market."

"Is that so... but, I'm surprised enough, that you know the materials. I have Holy Dragon Fangs... hm? Rare gems? --It can't be, the former Edelstein Kingdom?"

"You know of it? As expected of a hero, they are indeed made in that country."

"--I see. I thought, that it was strange to attack and occupy a small country with no value, where just some gems could be found. So that was the reason. I have to get it back for Celica without fail... No, wait a sec?"

"Is there something?"

"It can't be, you now won't tell me, that the one who made the sword, was the Hero God Vanus, won't you? In that case it's checkmate. 'Please make the sword for us because we want to kill you', what comedy is that?"

"No, it's also possible for a skilled master blacksmith. But all the tools to forge the Holy Sword have either been destroyed or were thrown into different dimensions. They are the tools that the Creation god used when she created the world."

I laughed because I felt just too defeated.

"*Hahaa*. Rather than searching for the materials that might still be produced somewhere in the world or killing off the newly born master blacksmiths, it's definitely easier to destroy the few tools. As expected of the cunning Demon Lord. No matter how I think about it, it's a certain checkmate, hu--H!"

"Eh!?"

I looked at Lapisia's luggage, that Lilille was holding.

Or more precisely at the huge hammer, that was shining in rainbow colors.

"Could it be that the 'Create' doesn't simply mean, that the hammer is used to create something, but might the actual meaning be that it belongs to the 'Creator God'???"

I burst out into laughter. I had no choice but to laugh.

--About Lapisia's instinct. And about the subconscious Mother Earth God within her.

The one, who actually works the hardest to save this world is probably neither I nor Lilille, but Lapisia.

Lilille looks puzzled beside me.

"Hm, hmm!? What is it? Eh, it can't be!?"

I give a broad grin.

"Aren't you glad, Lilille? This world is still hanging by a thread. Be grateful to Lapisia."

I roughly explained the circumstances.

Lilille takes the hammer in her hands and examines it while she is perplexed.

"Ah... it's true! This isn't an imitation made by humans! Letters and numbers are written at the bottom of the handle in mother's handwriting... This is without a doubt one of her spare tools!"

"Aren't you glad?"

While Lilille now really started to spill tears, she stroked the head of Lapisia, who was peacefully sleeping.

"Lapisia, thank you for the sake of the world. I won't care anymore if you call me 'Auntie'."

I stand up while I carry Lapisia.

"Well then, we know what we have to do. Let's go back!"

"Yes, Keika-san... Ah, but..."

Lilille spoke while she stood up and took the luggage.

"What is it?"

"You aren't strong enough as you are now. You need to have at least 100.000 believers."

"Hu, hundred thousand!?"

"Ah, since Lapisia is one of your believers, fifty thousand might suffice as well."

I looked at the palm of my hand. The number of believers has increased by the 500 elves, and the number of humans slowly increased to about 300."

"50.000... that leaves about 49.200, huh. I don't have a lot yet, but better than nothing. How much time do we have?"

"The Demon Lord should come out of his cocoon in... about one year."

I frowned.

"That's, really tight."

"I know... let's give it our best. And I'll also help you to spread your name."

"I see. Well, there doesn't seem to be another way. So, first things first, what we need the most right now is a master blacksmith rather than the gems."

"Eh? We need an enormous amount of gems. Even if we let a mine run non-stop, we won't make it in time."

I lifted the corners of my mouth and smiled.

"It's fine as long as we have even one gem. I mean, then we practically already have a whole bunch of them, right? "

I showed her the sleeping Lapisia.

"Ah, we can use Terraforming! That was a blind spot!"

"Exactly. And because I also already have Holy Dragon Fangs, this leaves just the master blacksmith. Don't you know of anyone excellent?"

"The Smithing God was petrified and sealed somewhere... And the people I knew are already dead."

"Is that so. Shall we ask Celica and the elves once we have returned?"

We went back down to the ground, that had become soil.

Lapisia's twin tails are tickling my arms.

Lilille's white habit was bathing in the night wind and beautifully swinging around.

CHAPTER 70

FUTURE PLANS

We returned to the elves' camp site.

Although the banquet had already ended, the elves were still enjoying some relaxed chats.

Celica's blond hair swings as she approaches.

"Welcome back, Keika-sama, Lily-sama."

Lilille gave herself the pseudonym of Lily the saint.

"It got late"

"We're back. We have to consult with you in detail about your personal connections to blacksmiths. But can you tell me first, where the chieftain is?"

"Yes, he is over there-- Ah, Lapisia-chan has fallen asleep, hasn't she? I'll hold her."

"Yeah, right. I'll leave her to you."

I handed her over to Celica. When I did this, Lapisia was leaning against the comfortable looking huge chest.

The chieftain Jagd overheard us and came over. Maybe I should call him a 'bichuunen' (TN: pretty middle-aged man, wordplay on bishounen), because he looks like a handsome man in his forties.

"You were calling for me, Keika-sama?"

"I'd actually like to ask everyone, but might you know an excellent master blacksmith? I need one."

"When you say blacksmith, you mean someone, who handles iron and magic silver, right? We elves take pride in our woodwork though..."

"Speaking of which, isn't there the elven master craftswoman Deedora? It seems that she was the one, who made the Frozen Rapier, that is hanging at Celica's waist. This sword is really strong"

"A work made by Deedora?! Even though she was an elf, her handling of iron and silver was prodigious."

"Where is she currently? Elves should be a long-living race after all."

"Unfortunately, she died."

"I see. That guy of the Four Heavenly Kings, huh..."

Jagd answers while having a sad smile on his face.

"No, she was drunk while she was drinking in her workshop, and when she fell over, the fire spread to the alcohol that she was pouring on herself... When her apprentice extinguished the fire, she was completely burned to a crisp."

"...Oh, I can vividly imagine that. Just from that I understand, what a good craftswoman she must have been."

"Dying at the forge might just have been a satisfying end for her. Other than her, I can't think of any good blacksmiths."

"Lily doesn't know anyone either... Celica, do you know of someone, even if it's just a rumor?"

"A master blacksmith... hmm, a long time ago, I heard a rumor of a prodigious Magic Seal Master Blacksmith, who certainly could bestow magic when he was forging."

"Heh. Where is he?"

"If he hasn't moved away, he should be in Industria, the capital of this country. Also, Industria is a metropolis for manufacturing. There are a lot of good craftsmen."

"I see. I guess we have to go there... Also, chieftain, I'm curious."

"What is it?"

"You said, that Deedora had an apprentice. Is he alive?"

"...I don't know. He was a fairykin, but the fairy world has been destroyed..."

--Fairykin. I think, that I have already made their acquaintance somewhere.

Ah, there is Majiria, whose little sister I have saved in the Tower of Trials.

It's been only four weeks since then, huh. It feels so far in the past.

"Lily, chieftain, I already got involved with the fairykin in the past and received the Fairy's Blessing after several things happened. Might you know, how to use it? I seems, that I can call my fairykin acquaintance with it."

Lilille tilts her head while she speaks.

"You just came to this world and already have the Fairy's Blessing... I think, it's 'In my name of XX, who possesses the Fairy's Blessing... Oh Fairy XX, who colors the world... Answer my call', isn't it?"

"You're right, Lily-sama. With that, you can talk. And if you use 'Respond to my call and manifest' at the end instead, the fairykin will be called here."

Jagd complemented the explanation. That's an elf for you.

I spread my legs to a shoulder's width and stretch my hands out.

"Let's try this a little-- In my name of Keika Hiko-no-Mikoto, who possesses the Fairy's Blessing... Oh Fairy Majiria, who colors the world... Respond to my call and manifest"

When I did this, a magic circle with a heptagram was drawn about one meter in front of me on the ground.

Then, there was a very bright light, and Majiria was standing there.

Completely naked.

Majiria seemed to have been in the middle of bathing. The beautiful curves and wings are faintly gleaming alongside the wet, red hair, that is stretching down her back.

I mean, he turned out to be a girl.

The clothes, bag and bow, that belonged to her, were scattered about.

Her eyes went wide when she saw me.

We silently stared at each other.

Suddenly, her face was dyed in a bright red, and Majiria concealed her front.

"Aah--in front of so many people... Keika, sama. I wished, you'd, contact me before you call me."

Majiria crouches down while tears are floating in her eyes.

The wings at her smooth back are vividly flapping.

"As expected of a fairy. You're beautiful. Particularly in the nude..."

"Do, Don't look...!"

Jagd approached her, took off his jacket and let her put it on.

"Please wear this. We're friends of the fairykin."

"Yo, you are, elves?"

"There are only women and us elves, who are related to the fairykin, around. The only

man here is the hero, so please be at ease."

"Isn't the hero the one with the most indecent look in his eyes..."

"It's only natural. If a beautiful girl is suddenly appearing naked in front of me, I just have to take a look at her without fail."

"Eh! Wh, what are you saying!?"

Majiria's face blushed red to her ears.

I was pinched by Celica from the side.

"Please keep your teasing at that. It's pathetic."

"You might be right. I'll turn around. Please quickly put on your clothes."

"Ye, yes"

Lilille steps forward with a godly smile floating on her face.

"I'll help you"

"Th, thanks"

After a while, Majiria had finished changing into her clothes.

Meanwhile, Celica brought Lapisia inside our tent to sleep.

The dressed Majiria speaks, while her cheeks are still blushed.

"Why did you have to call me so suddenly? --When I went through such great pains to hide my gender."

"I already had a hunch that you might be a girl, so don't worry about it."

"Eh!? My magic should even deceive the gods"

Certainly, I wasn't able to look through her with "Truth Sight".

But although I had three believers before I entered the Tower of Trials, they had increased to five when I came out. Moreover, they were virgins without the "Light"-attribute. One of them was Lapisia, and the chance was high, that the other one was Majiria, because I had saved her sister.

Although there was no proof.

"Well, I haven't become a hero for nothing. --Rather, there is something I'd like to ask you. Might you know the fairykin apprentice of Deedoria?"

"If you mean Hemur-jiisan, he is an acquaintance of me."

"Oh! Where is he? Can I call him here immediately?"

She shook her head. Her still moist hair is swinging around.

"That person is quite eccentric. He won't respond even if he's called. Even if you're a god or the Demon Lord himself, you won't be able to meet him unless you go to him."

"Would he even refuse, if you as his acquaintance would say, that it's a request from a hero?"

"I'd do it if it would work."

"He's the archetype of a craftsman, huh. Where is he?"

"He's on a remote continent directly next to the fairy world."

"Is that remote continent far away?"

"It takes about a month to reach by ship from the west if the wind plays its part. From the east, it takes about two weeks, but it's dangerous, because strong monsters are lurking there."

--Wind won't be a problem if it's me, but from the east, it's probably about the same distance as crossing the Atlantic Ocean.

"Hmm, that's pretty far. Maybe I should let Lily or Leo-- no, I have no choice but to go there myself since I'm a hero.... But I should look around Industria first."

Celica nods.

"That might be for the best. It's close and there are many good craftsmen."

"Well then, Majiria, you can go home"

Majiria made big eyes and looked angry.

"Eh!? That's it!? --Then couldn't you just have talked to me!"

"Don't say it like that. I wanted to test, whether I can call you. It would be troublesome if it wouldn't work in case of an emergency. I'm sorry to have called you all of a sudden. Also, my eyes were treated to something beautiful."

While she was smiling just a moment ago, her cheeks were blushing and she cast her eyes downward.

"Keika-sama, it's unfair to say it like that..."

While she said this, she was leisurely picking up her luggage and her bow and put them on her back.

"Take care"

"Next time, I'll contact you in advance!"

"Yes"

While inflating her puffed up cheeks, Majiria is flapping her wings and flies high into the night sky.

I looked at Celica and Lilille.

"Let's go to bed soon. We'll head for Industria tomorrow."

"Yes!" "I'll get the supplies"

Then we parted ways with Jagd and went to our tent.

--Lilille.

"What is it?"

--You said, that I'd need another 50.000 believers, but won't maybe 30.000 be enough as well?

"Hmm. It's already quite extreme to challenge Vanus with 50.000 believers. He's a god after all."

--When thinking about the number of Vanus's believers, I feel that 30.000 or 50.000 won't make that much of a difference.

"Powers can be granted to you, once you have reached 50.000 believers."

--Heh. I see. Maybe I should do something like Oukuninushi-no-Mikoto, huh. I'll be added to the main faction then?"

"I don't really understand your allegory, but you might have the general idea."

--Also, I understand, what Vanus did, but just what is his motivation behind it?

"Other than, 'I want to obtain everything in the world'?"

--It would be easy to tell, if he'd just seek strength like Greyhades did... Well, please let me know if you find something out.

"Yes. Anytime."

I parted with Lilille and arrived at our tent.

Then, Fioria spoke to me.

"Keika-sama, can I talk to you for a moment?..."

"What is it? --Celica, please go to sleep ahead of me."

"Understood, Keika-sama."

I part with Celica and follow Fioria.

I was guided to a plain tent, unlike the one that I was given.

It was about the size of two tatamis and Rii was sleeping inside. Most likely, she was strained by the travel, as she was soundly asleep.

Fioria and I are sitting in an empty space. This was actually the only place that was free.

Fioria lowers her head.

"Thank you very much for this time."

"No, don't worry about it. The most important thing is, that I was able to help."

"Then... as thanks..."

"Hm? Isn't it enough already, that you have guided me to the World Tree and that the elves are now worshipping me?"

"Those were the thanks for saving Rii, and that you have saved the elves. This is for saving me..."

When she said this, she began to take off her crude linen clothing.

Her white skin is shining in the dark. Huge round shapes are released from her clothes, as if they are bursting open.

"...You don't have to push yourself."

"I'm not pushing myself. Your conspicuous service was deeply burned into my eyes... My heart is beating fast just by closing my eyes... Can you feel it?"

She took my hands and pressed them against her huge breasts. My fingers are buried

in their softness.

"I, I see"

When I put strength into my fingers, they are captured by the plump breasts as if they got stuck.

I'm thinking once again, that they are bigger than Celica's.

I was sitting cross-legged, and Fioria was breathing hard when she brought her upper body down onto me.

Then, she opened the hem of my clothes and put her hands inside. She has the fingertips of a men-knowing woman.

Fioria speaks while I'm touching her directly.

"It's been a long time since I was accepted so warmly by my kind."

"Why? Were you singled out?"

"On the surface, their behavior didn't change. But because my husband was a human and the one, who lifted the barrier and guided the demons, there was always a looming coldness behind their smiles."

"He lifted the barrier? Was he a demon that was impersonating a human?"

"That's possible. Or maybe he was just manipulated. I won't ever know the truth, since he has already died."

--To the elves, her husband was a serious offender.

The elves seem to be intellectual and treat each other equally. However, even if they didn't change their way of interaction, she must have suffered from the invisible coldness. She probably has experienced a lot of subtle discrimination, such as receiving the most frugal tent.

That Rii's ceremony has failed, might also.....

"It must've been painful... You probably thought, that they didn't let you participate in the final battle to let you get away, but to get rid of you."

"Yes... but because I brought you, who saved the World Tree, they are now heartily speaking to me again just like in the past... And you also helped Rii..."

"*Sniff*", Fioria spoke in a tearful voice.

I reflexively stroked her head that was on lying on my crossed legs. Her green hair moves up and down.

"Aren't you glad... ah!"

--This is bad! I registered Rii as an elf.

Has she actually been a half-elf?

No, wouldn't she be of a different race, if the other party was a demon!?

I don't know the laws of this world, and since I don't know her original race, I can't fix it.

Can Lilille maybe do something for her?

No, the World Tree, that is also a god, has already tampered with her before.

The problem might be of a deeper nature than I recognize.

I can't judge it as I am now.

I speak while I'm still stroking her green hair.

"Regarding Rii... it's possible, that the problem isn't completely solved yet."

Fioria wetted her lips and raised her face.

"Is there, still something wrong with her?"

"I don't think, that there's a need to worry, but the ceremony, that involved a god, failed. She should be observed for a while to confirm that there are no side-effects."

"Would you, watch over Rii?"

"Ah, of course. I'll be together with the saint for a while, so it should work out somehow"

"Please, Keika-sama"

Fioria hugged me. She pressed herself so strong against me, that her huge breasts got literally smashed.

I got pushed down under the force, and Fioria was mounted on top of me.

Her flower-like lips are falling down on me like rain, and my skin is gleaming from her tongue's moisture.

Our body temperatures melted together when I hugged her warm body like I was sinking into it.

However, Celica's smiling face flickers before my eyes and for some reason my chest becomes tight.

Because Rii was slightly moving, we didn't say a word when we parted ways.

After that, I showered myself with water and returned to my own tent.

Although it was considerably larger than Fioria's tent, it was still quite small for four people and the luggage.

I push Celica and Minya, who are already asleep, to the side, and lie down.

I'm thinking, while I look at the starry sky, that can be vaguely seen from the entrance.

--I'll ask Lilille about Rii tomorrow.

So, next is a blacksmith, huh. I hope, that I'll find one in Industria.

Otherwise, I should return to the village.

The fairy world is closer from the east, but where do I get a ship?

Should I ask the merchant Driad to prepare a ship that can cross the ocean? He should be able to do that.

I mean, he hasn't paid back the money I lent him yet. And even if I slowly start to withdraw it, we should have reached the point where the funds can be reinvested.

It was quite the shock, that the Demon Lord is the god Vanus.

He'll come out of his cocoon in one year.

I have to gather 50.000 believers until then.

...I'd have some leeway, if I had at least five years. It seems, that the population in this world is quite small.

Whether it's popularity or believers, every beginning is hard.

Once the flame of popularity is ignited, it will spread like wildfire though.

It's difficult.

While I was trapped in my thoughts, Celica brought her body close to me like a puppy.

"What's wrong, Celica?"

"...The nights in the desert, are cold"

"I guess you're right-- it's cold if you're alone"

I gently hugged her. Her flower-like scent tickles my nose.

"*Ah*" She leaked out a sweet, long breath and her slender body quivered.

I strongly hugged her to warm her even more, and our skin was closely touching.



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